Who am I?

What is Space?

What is Time?

A RETURN TO THE PERENNIAL QUESTIONS

Fresh Answers for Our Times

What is a Person?

What actually exists?

What is Real?

How Do I Come to know anything?

M. G. Jackson

How Does Causation work?

PERMANENT GREEN

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Fresh Answers for Our Times

Author : **M.G. Jackson**

First Edition : July, 2013

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Copies : 500

Price : ₹**150/-**

Published by & for copies

Permanent Green
An Imprint of Manchi Pustakam
12-13-439, Street No. 1
Tarnaka, Secunderabad - 500 017.
Mobile : 94907 46614
Email: info@manchipustakam.in
Website: www.manchipustakam.in

ISB Number : 978-93-80153-96-4

Layout & cover design
ankush printers & Designers, Nallakunta,
Hyd - 40. & 27663211, 9912929078

Printed by
Charitha Impressions
Azamabad, Hyd - 40. Ph : 27678411

For Suman

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Preface

The worldview of any culture or cultural era is shaped by, and at the same time shapes, that culture or cultural era. A look back at the history of Western civilisation reveals, for example, several distinct cultural eras and their guiding worldviews. Like living organisms, worldviews are born, grow and mature, and finally wither and die. They are born out of the necessity for finding more adequate ways of understanding and explaining contemporary experience than is possible on the basis of the existent worldview. Thus, for example, the Hellenistic worldview became increasingly inadequate, and indeed counterproductive, in the European late Middle Ages, throwing society into confusion and uncertainty. In the 17th century a breakthrough was made by the complete abandonment of the existing worldview and the creation of an entirely new one – the Enlightenment worldview. In the 20th century Western (and increasingly, global) culture again found itself confused and uncertain as new phenomena in science and society appeared that could not be understood and explained by the primary concepts of the Enlightenment worldview. Fine-tuning the existent worldview has only created more problems. An entirely new worldview is needed, but is yet to appear. Global society is in a crisis: global warming, environmental destruction, loss of community, violent conflicts over limited natural resources (land, water, forests, minerals, oil), financial instability, and persistent poverty. All these are all problems that we seem powerless to solve.

In an earlier book, *Transformative Learning for a New Worldview: Learning to Think Differently* (Jackson, 2008), I explored the process by which an existent worldview is replaced by an alternative, more viable, one. This process is, in essence, guided by insight. In the midst of the confusion and uncertainty of a culture in transition, a few people here and there

acutely feel that the primary concepts of the prevailing worldview are somehow fundamentally wrong. This causes emotional pain, and at the same time, a vague groping for alternative concepts. It is in this state of mind that insights may arise that suggest alternatives. Typically when these are received they are not immediately articulated in the language of discursive thought, but as specific ways of doing things that diverge radically from the ways generally accepted. These people to whom insights appear are the pioneers of general cultural transformation. They pioneer new systems of agriculture, health care, education, business management, science, urban design, and most other areas of human endeavour. In due course a logically-ordered, coherent, all-embracing new worldview that legitimises these alternative ways of doing things comes to be formulated.

In this book I argue that to formulate an effective alternative worldview requires us, first of all, to shrug off the mental straitjacket of the Enlightenment worldview that still unconsciously, by mere force of habit, guides our thinking. The way to do this is consciously to return to the perennial questions – those basic questions that the people of every culture and cultural era have implicitly asked themselves: who am I; what is the nature of the experience of that I; and, what is real. The second of these questions is composed of seven sub-questions: what are the actual, ultimate entities that I experience; what is life; what is time; what is space; what is the nature of causation; what is a person; and, how does a person come to know anything. The answers we formulate to these questions will be the primary concepts that make up a new worldview.

In my earlier book, mentioned above, I sketched a set of possible answers to the perennial questions – that is, the concepts that together make up an alternative worldview – in outline. This was done primarily to illustrate the method of transformative learning and therefore a full development of the worldview was not possible. This is now being done in the present book.

My aim has been to present a concrete, yet comprehensive, description of this new worldview, and of the method of producing it. I have used some primary concepts from non-Western cultures and from pre-Enlightenment

Western culture, presenting them in a contemporary idiom. Examples are the concept that all things are living systems and that all things are intimately inter-connected. I have also recognised and developed some contemporary insights. In doing all this, I have taken care to ensure that the different answers do not contradict one another, that they form a coherent system, and that the system is adequate to the needs of contemporary global culture.

In this system each of the concepts that make up the answer to the second of the perennial questions (what is the nature of experience) presupposes the definitions of all the other six concepts, and of the system as a whole. Full definitions of these concepts will thus emerge only at the end of the book. Initially, in Part I (Chapters 1 and 2), a brief introductory statement is offered in respect of the definition of each concept, and also for the system as a whole. Then in Parts III and IV (Chapters 6 to 15) each concept in turn is developed more fully, showing how it depends for its rationale on all the other concepts. In this way the initial, introductory definitions gain steadily in depth and relevance as one proceeds through the book. To make the reading somewhat easier a glossary has been provided.

The concept offered as an answer to both the first and third of the perennial questions is independent of all the concepts offered in answer to the second question. However, each of the latter is dependent for its definition on the former.

The method employed in developing this system is described in Part II (Chapers 3 to 5). The system produced by this method presupposes this method. Further, the method employed derives it legitimacy from the system produced.

Finally, the framing of the initial questions asked, that is, my versions of the perennial questions, and the answers which constitute the system are not independent.

Throughout the book I have attempted to make clear the relevance of the system and its constituent concepts to contemporary problems.

No such exercise can begin without reference to the past. Ideas that once featured in mainstream thought but were subsequently discarded, as well as ideas that were articulated but never gained wide acceptance, may, in the changed conditions of contemporary life, be seen as useful, and even necessary. Every conceptual resource, from whatever culture or cultural era, must be considered. At the same time, the use of a particular idea does not mean that all the ideas associated with it in a particular historical context need be accepted.

The Indian elements in this system are unmistakable. However, I have not accepted any existent system of Indian thought completely. The important concepts adopted are the following.

1. The Hindu Advaita Vedantic concept that experience and the subject of that experience are appearances in pure awareness. Both appear together; there cannot be one without the other. Technically, this concept is termed *dristhi-shristhi vada*.

2. The Hinayana Buddhist concept that the basic units of manifest existence are not bits of material stuff, but momentary experiences. The concept also appeared in Hellenic Greece in the West, most notably in the writings of Heraclitus, but did not gain a permanent foothold. In the 20th century it reappeared in A. N. Whitehead's *Process and Reality.*

3. The Vedic concept of law (causation) as immanent in all existent entities. This concept is not, however, exclusively Vedic, but is implied in the mythical mode of thought and is therefore found in all ancient cultures and survives even today in cultures where myth is still honoured. It is tentatively beginning to re-appear today in contemporary global culture in a variety of contexts.

In respect of the methods by which a new system of primary concepts is developed and described, this book diverges radically from Western tradition in two significant ways. First, insight and not discursive thought is recognised to be the primary element in the construction of new concepts. The term 'insight' is a general term which includes intuitions

and visions, both waking and in dreams. These insights are later explicated in terms of discursive thought or mythical symbol. Without a valid insight to begin with, no construction of new concepts is possible, and indeed, has ever been done. Second, myth and discursive systems of thought are seen as alternative modes of explicating insights. Indeed, effective articulation of insights requires the participation of both modes. In other words, myth, on the one hand, and discursive system, on the other, are complimentary, and not antagonistic, modes of attempting to understand ourselves and the experiences in which we find ourselves participating. In the West, myth making, and indeed, even the ability to understand traditional myths, died out long ago. As a preliminary to the present exercise, an understanding of the nature and function of myth in human society must be recovered. Given this understanding, traditional concepts will be examined, irrespective of whether their formulation is in the mode of myth or of discursive thought. Further, in describing the concepts that feature in this system both modes of exposition have been used to ensure the utmost possible clarity and comprehensiveness.

In India, traditional myths have tended to ossify and so lose their relevance for contemporary life; they are dying from the disease of literalism of interpretation. In this condition they are no longer suitable for use in an exercise such as this. Wherever in this book mythical symbols have been employed, an attempt has been made to disinter their universal, core meaning.

The overall objectives of this exercise may now be briefly indicated. These may be stated with reference to the need to correct the debilitating defects in the worldview of contemporary global culture. The most important of these are the following.

1. There is confusion in the present-day worldview over the definition of a person. On the one hand, the person is said to be a material entity which is to be understood in terms of its structure and functioning. On the other hand, it is said to be a detached observer of phenomena, including the phenomenon of the material entity it calls ‘my body’. Whitehead has drawn attention to this contradiction in the following

words: '[The contemporary worldview insists on a] …scientific realism, based upon mechanism…conjoined with an unwavering belief in the world of men…as being composed of self-determining organisms (Whitehead, 1925, p. 76).'

2. The 17th-century European worldview which we have inherited does not offer an integral view of the several areas of human concern. It was framed by scientists with interests limited to science, and, more specifically, to the science of physical objects. The subsequent attempt to impose this view on all of human experience caused a reaction that has fragmented thought and action into separate areas of concern warped and stunted enquiry in these other areas. Even worse, other concerns are often dismissed as unhelpful, distracting carry-overs from the past.

3. The materialist scientific worldview, as formulated in the 17th century and refined in the 18th and 19th centuries, proved to be inadequate in the 20th century. Quoting Whitehead yet again: '…this scientific field of thought is now, in the 20th century, too narrow for the concrete facts which are before it for analysis (Whitehead, 1925, p. 66).

It has been my endeavour to address and, as far as possible, remove all these defects.

The significance of this alternative worldview, from the point of view of the history of world thought can be summed up briefly as follows.

1. It effectively combines what are in my view the best elements of both Vedantic and the Buddhist worldviews. Vedanta offers fuller and more satisfying answers to the first and third of the perennial questions, while Hinayana Buddhism has a more logical and adequate answer to the second. The Buddhist concept of 'dependent origination' (*Pratityasamutpada*) is accepted. The Vedic concept of *Rta*, a cosmic causal agency, is the means by which it is effected.

2. It overcomes the deeply ingrained bias in Western thought of seeing an objective material world 'out there' by showing how it is more effective to assume that experiences *per se* are the final units of

manifest existence. They are unreal in themselves because they have a beginning in time, but become dependently real when viewed against the background of that which is real. This alternative is essentially the Hinayana Buddhist view, enriched with some features of the 20th-century Western thought as interpreted by Whitehead.

3. The time is now past when we can usefully work within the tradition of any one cultural stream. The urgent need today is a more adequate conceptual framework for the global culture now overtaking us than the one inherited from the European Enlightenment.

My son Kirti helped me with this book in many practical ways. My friend Suman Pande constantly encouraged me to keep writing whenever I got bogged down. Another friend, Shanu, also encouraged me by her interest in the book. In discussing various topics covered in the book Madhu and Rajeev Tandan pointed out several logical blunders that had crept into my thinking. I am thankful to all of them.

I am grateful to Purnima Mehta for her skilful copy editing of the text.

I wish also to thank my publishers, Permanent Green, for the fine job they have done in bringing out this book.

M. G. Jackson

Part I

Fresh Answers to the Perennial Questions

1
That Which Is

This chapter and the next present an overview of a new system of primary concepts and give a general description of these concepts. At the same time, the general approach to the task of constructing such a system will also be illustrated.

General notions

This aim of this book is to develop a new set of general notions in terms of which we seek to understand ourselves and our experiences. There are two sets of such notions. The first set is: 1) an 'I' who is the subject of experience; 2) a flow of discrete, momentary ever-new experiences; and, 3) an enduring, unchanging something in the midst of this flow of experiences. These can be framed in terms of the following questions: 1) Who am I? 2) What is the nature of experience? That is, what exactly is experienced and how? and, 3) What is real?

In the various worldviews that have appeared in human history, one or the other of these questions has generally been emphasised, sometimes completely eclipsing the others. However, even if any of these questions is not visible, it is inevitably presupposed. For example, no answer to the second question is possible without presupposing answers to the first and the third. Our task is thus to construct a single, coherent set of answers to all three questions. The questions need to be explicitly asked and answered. In doing so we must aim at the most complete account possible, and one that is relevant to the conditions of contemporary culture.

The questions may be framed variously. However, the endeavour should be to avoid, as far as possible, all pre-suppositions. The second question is almost always framed as: what is the world like. This pre-supposes a world 'out there', existing prior to and independently of any subject, or an 'I', who experiences it. Another presupposition in this formulation is that

the 'I' who experiences the world 'out there' is a person. Both these presuppositions are unnecessary and seriously limit us in our choice of possible answers. That there is experiencing, or more accurately a flow of discrete units of experiencing, is difficult to deny. From this starting point we have greater freedom in deciding exactly what is experienced and by whom. It is freer from presuppositions than 'what is the world like' and, as I will demonstrate in this book, a more useful question to ask.

The second set of general notions is a subset of the notion 'experience'. They are seven in number: the ultimate units of manifest existence, or actual existents, life, time, space, causation, the subject and knowing. Specific definitions of each of these seven notions, when taken together, will constitute an answer to the second of the perennial questions. They are termed the 'formative elements of experiencing'.

The word 'notion' used here lacks conceptual definiteness, conveying the sense of an idea only vaguely conceived. Any number of definite ideas might conform to the general requirements of a given notion. A notion is not an idea, but the conceptual background or matrix from which an idea, as it were, emerges. It circumscribes the area in which an idea can take shape. Notions are not concepts, but what gives form to concepts. They are what Plato (in the Timaeus) says are 'brute' facts of existence. In themselves they are unexplainable. An alternative term that might, therefore, be used is 'categories of thought'.

The notion 'actual existents', for example, denotes a general aspect of experience which must be specifically defined in any worldview. Thus in the Hellenic Greek and present-day materialist worldviews define actual existents as enduring, self-sufficient particles of substance or matter atoms. For Aristotle amorphous 'substance' is what actually exists. Individual units of substance are created by the imposition of 'forms', or abstract, eternal, organising principles. This view of substance was a feature of the European worldview for a millennium and a half after Aristotle. For the twentieth-century philosopher A. N. Whitehead, actual existents are neither particles of matter nor amorphous substance, but momentary units or 'drops of experience'.

The answers to the perennial questions, including the definitions offered for the seven formative elements of experiencing, will be termed primary concepts. Taken together, they must form an internally self-consistent system of thought, or worldview, which is coherent and all-embracing. A worldview is system of concepts shared by all members of a given culture. It forms, so to speak, the imaginative background to all the activities of that culture.

The term 'self-consistency', or 'logical self-consistency', denotes that the various answers that comprise the system must not contradict one another. 'Coherence' means that all the answers must pre-suppose each other, so that in isolation none of them has any meaning. All the answers must also pre-suppose a single, all-embracing, over-arching general notion. 'All-embracing' means that all aspects of experience can be explained in terms of the system (Whitehead, 1929, p. 3). An effort will be made in this book to meet these requirements as far as possible. The closer we come to meeting them, the more satisfactory and enduring our worldview will be, and hence the cultural model based upon it.

Answers to the perennial questions always tentative

No set of answers to the perennial questions can be final, or good for all time. In each cultural era people frame a set of answers, a system of specific concepts or worldview, that persists for a time. With changing circumstances the scheme gradually becomes irrelevant, even counterproductive, and needs to be given up. A new worldview must then be formulated. All such worldviews are tentative, fallible structures, the usefulness of which must be demonstrated by their success in practice. There will always be some loose ends, some awkward details that do not logically fit, some final mystery which has eluded us. Ultimately the world is a mystery, and a mystery it will always remain. The most we can hope for is, in Plato's memorable phrase in the Timaeus, 'a likely story'.

The tentative, incomplete nature of all worldviews is frankly admitted in the Rigveda..

> Who really knows? Who can possibly tell it?
> Whence was it born? Whence issued this creation?

> Even the gods came after its emergence.
> Then who can tell from whence it came to be?
> …He who surveys it in the highest heaven,
> He surely knows – or maybe He does not!
>
> (Rigveda, X, 129, 6-7. Panikkar, 2001, p. 58)

In the 20th century A. N. Whitehead, in introducing his essay *Process and Reality*, reminds us:

> There remains the final reflection, how shallow, puny, and imperfect are efforts to sound the depths in the nature of things. In philosophical discussion, the merest hint of dogmatic certainty as to finality of statement is an exhibition of folly.
>
> (Whitehead, 1929, p. xiv)

And yet it becomes necessary at times to a formulate a new world-view, however tentatively and however far it may fall short of the ideal we have set for ourselves. A conceptual framework is imperative if we are to make sense of our experience. The worldview of contemporary global culture that we have inherited from the European Enlightenment is no longer an adequate guide, leaving us adrift, subject to doubt, confusion and fear, without direction or meaning in our lives. It is leading us up blind alleys and into dark places of death and destruction.

The formulation of a new worldview is always a collective effort, arrived at by a process of dialogue, or what I have elsewhere termed a 'transformative learning exercise' (Jackson, 2008). Today it is imperative we conduct this exercise at a global level, using the conceptual resources, current perspectives and concerns of people from all cultural streams. This is already beginning to happen. I see the system of ideas suggested here as one input into this exercise, an input that I hope will widen the area of discourse and also foster greater critical reflection.

What is real?

The most general of the three perennial questions is the third – what is real? To answer it criteria are needed that can be applied to the various

elements of experience. The criteria adopted here are three: 1) what is real requires nothing else but itself to exist; 2) what is real always exists, that is, it does not come and go; and, 3) it never changes.

Applying these criteria to the flow of experience it is immediately evident that it cannot in any sense be real. In the first place, the flow is of discrete, momentary units. These experiences suddenly appear and as suddenly disappear. Individually they are impermanent and so cannot be termed real. They cannot with certainty even be called glimpses or snapshots of an enduring entity. Even if there is such an entity, say, a world out there, it also cannot be real since the successive glimpses of it, if that is what they are, are not identical. Each glimpse is of something different, even if only slightly so. Further, the subject of an experience, to the extent that it defines itself in terms of that experience, also is not the same from experience to experience, and thus is also unreal. Finally, there can only be an awareness that episodes of experiencing come and go if there is something in the background against which their comings and goings are evident. They are thus dependent on that something.

In spite of all this, I act as though there is a single, common, continuous world. I assume that it existed before I was born and will continue to exist after I die – it continues to exist when I sleep, only I am unaware of it. I assume that each of us looks at the same world, though from somewhat different perspectives, thus giving rise to our somewhat differing accounts of it.

The implications of questioning this comfortable view are too threatening to our settled way of thinking for us to take it seriously. In not challenging this way of thinking, however, we forego the possibility of gaining a more satisfactory understanding of existence than we now have, and thus perhaps of finding our way out of a difficult, threatening world situation. The worldview, being developed in this book is based upon an acceptance of the conclusion that the worlds we experience are unreal.

What then, if anything, is real? If an experience, including the person that seems to experience it, is not a persistent entity, but only a momentary appearance, then logically there has to be a something in the background that is continuous. Movement, coming and going, is only intelligible against a non-moving, ever-present backdrop. That something is self-existent, ever

existing, and does not change.[1] It is 'That Which Is', the ever-present, unchanging backdrop of all experiencing.[2] It is no thing, conceptual or perceptual, but simply that which makes the appearances of all things possible. It is pure awareness.

It is necessary to elaborate on the term 'pure awareness'. In the ordinary thought and speech of contemporary global culture awareness is always of something definite, an awareness of an object, a physical entity (one of which is the body I take myself to be), a situation or a fact. This is termed *consciousness*. It occurs only during the waking and dream states. Awareness, however, persists even in the absence of anything definite to be aware of, in which case it is *content-less awareness*. This occurs in the deep sleep state and is termed in contemporary global culture *unconsciousness*.[3] Unqualified, or pure, awareness is the common factor in all three types of experiencing – waking, dreaming and deep sleep. Pure awareness is an awareness of being aware.

If the stream of experiencing ceases what remains is this awareness of being aware. There is no one to be aware, nor anything to be aware of, and yet the subject of a waking experience can, under special circumstances, dissolve in pure awareness. On the resumption of experiencing, the subject is simultaneously aware of the content of those experiences, and of being so aware. Once gained, that dual awareness is not lost; it persists through all subsequent experiences, even though at times the awareness of objects seems to gain centre-stage.

The subject that knows this fact of pure awareness has ceased identifying itself with the content of experience. It knows that neither the content, nor the 'I' who identifies with that content, is real. It knows both the reality underlying all experiencing, and its own true identity. They are one and the same. Any worldview that fails to acknowledge this reality cannot be viable in the long run.

The term 'knowing' in the previous two paragraphs calls for comment. It cannot be 'knowing' in the usual sense of the term, since that implies a knower and a something known. In pure awareness there is neither of these, and yet there is knowing. In this type of knowing the 'knower' becomes what is 'known'. This explains the earlier statement that the knower, the I who is a person in an experience, 'dissolves' in pure

awareness. After that, the subject continues to abide in that state, even while awareness of things, that is, of experiencing, is superimposed on it.

On several occasions in my life, I have had a vision, identical each time, of the coming into being of an experience.[4] This vision has helped me clarify for myself the concept of pure awareness being suggested here, and its relation to experience. In the interval between sleeping and waking there is a sudden arising of the simple awareness 'I am'; I do not know who I am or where I am. There is only the awareness that there is no 'me' (a person in an experience) and no experience. I am all alone. The first time this vision occurred there was also anxiety; maybe I am really no one, no where. But then there was the sudden appearance of a familiar form – the person I seem to be in everyday experience – in a familiar place among familiar persons. With this there was a flood of relief wiping out the insecurity bordering on panic of the moment before. In later instances of this vision, I was able to reassure myself that though I was apparently alone I would swiftly gain an identity – become a definite person in a definite place. All that was required was to wait calmly. I had no knowledge whatsoever as to what would appear, only a certainty that something definite would appear. In a sense, what would appear presently, the objective me, already existed, even if it was not yet manifest. There was a definite feeling that during that brief waiting period there was intense activity going on 'behind the scenes', like the last-minute bustle on the stage before the curtain goes up.

The similarity of this vision to the many mythical accounts of the first man is obvious. One suspects that this very vision or ones like it are responsible for these myths. In the Brihad-aranyaka Upanishad we read how the first man found himself alone.

> Looking around, he saw nothing else than himself. He said....'I am'....Verily he had no delight. He was, indeed, as large as a woman and a man closely embraced. He caused that self to fall into two pieces. Therefrom arose a husband and a wife....He copulated with her. Therefrom human beings were produced.'
>
> (Brihad-aranyaka Upanishad, 1, 4, 1-3. Hume, 1931)

In this process the 'bringing forth an experience' is shown, as it were, in slow motion. It is a glimpse, I suggest, of what invariably happens more or less instantaneously when any experience (waking and dreaming or deep sleep), comes into existence.

Reality and appearance

Where does all this leave us? The momentary, fleeting waking, dream and deep sleep experiences that appear are not real. And yet their appearance is a stubborn fact. Only in a deep meditative state can the ceaseless flow of worlds be stemmed, and then only for as long as that state lasts. Even those who have been able to stop identifying with the content of experience completely and permanently tell us that experiences continue.[5] This should give us pause. It would seem to be a mistake to dismiss out of hand the appearances of experiences as unreal. Were we to do so, where would that get us? We would still be immersed in these experiences and willy-nilly forced to act. We therefore must come to terms with them.

Experiences are not real in terms of the criteria of reality set up here, and yet they are obviously related to what is real; they are dependent upon, or emerge from, it. But the real, That Which Is, is, by definition nothing, no thing, having no content and unrelated to anything else. Indeed, the concept of the All, of That which alone is, precludes the concept of other, of anything outside itself. Moreover, an experience is something, and it is logically impossible for something (an experience) to come out of nothing. We have come to a logical impasse. Beyond it lies a mystery. Why are there experiences at all, rather than no experiences? What is the relationship between That Which Is and the experiences that appear? These too are perennial questions – questions for which logical answers have never been found.

Here we come face to face with the fact that there are aspects of reality that are simply beyond the power of logical mentation to explain. This is not surprising, seeing that logical mentation can only deal with things that appear, while we are concerned here with that which is prior to appearance.

This is a realm which is only accessible to insight or vision. Further, such insight or vision can only find expression in the concrete symbols of metaphor and myth. Such metaphors and myths are not rational explanations, and therefore cannot satisfy reason. They are rather attempts to describe a trans-logical mystery. They are descriptions of the mystery, or at least hints as to its nature, which satisfy our need to understand ourselves, the experiences in which we find ourselves involved, and the certainty we feel that in the background of the comings and goings of experiences there is something permanent.

The most obvious feature of an experience is the emergence to begin with of a subject-object duality. With the coming into existence of an experience, as in the waking-up insight described a moment ago, an experience and an observer of that experience were found to emerge from a state of pure awareness. It will be helpful for our understanding of this process of creation to assume, on logical grounds, a stage in which there is only this bare duality. This stage is followed by the coming into operation of the seven formative elements of experiencing, and finally by the 'precipitation' of an experience from an indistinct background 'solution' of potentiality. This potentiality exists prior to the appearance of the precipitate – prior to the coming into operation of the seven formative elements of thought, or even to the emergence of the initial duality.[6] This potential for the creation of an experience will be termed simply 'the Potential'.

This line of reasoning leads to the conclusion that the Potential is the bridge between That Which Is and the experiences that arise from it, experiences which cannot be said to be real. In itself the Potential is neither real nor unreal. It partakes of the unreality of the experiences it gives rise to, and of the reality of the That in which, we can only suppose, it resides. To say that the Potential 'resides' in That Which Is, or, what amounts to the same thing, that it is an inherent feature of That Which Is, is, of course, illogical. There can be nothing definite, not even a potential for the creation of something definite, in the Nothing, in the That which alone is.

A traditional symbolic representation of this concept of three simultaneous ways of viewing the unitary Real may be helpful, seeing that we have come up against a logical impasse. The Indian Vedic god Varun

is considered the Creator and Controller of the universe. He and his role are described and his praises sung in Rigveda Book VIII, hymn 41 entitled *Varun*. Verse 2 describes his creative role.

> Him altogether praise I with the song and hymns our fathers sang, and with Nabhaka's eulogies, –
>
> Him dwelling at the river's source, surrounded by his Sisters Seven.
>
> (Rigveda VIII. 41, 2. Griffith, 1896)

Here the 'Him' who is being praised is the one who dwells at the Source of the River of Manifestation. His flowing out from the Source is the world-creative act. In this work of world-creation He is helped by His Sisters Seven, which have been termed in this book the seven formative elements of experience.

The stumbling block in these accounts is the logical discontinuity between the Source and the potential for the creation of an experience. The best we can do, perhaps, is to say that the potential for the creation of an experience exists as an abstraction 'within' the Source. And yet, there is no 'outside' or 'inside' before the creation of an experience, and, for that matter, no 'before' and no 'after' either. That Which Is, the Potential, and the experience exist simultaneously, and from this point of view there is no creation.

We will begin then by saying that the Real, the That Which Is, can be visualised from three different perspectives. The first is the unitary, ever-present, unchanging, unknowable reality – pure awareness. From a second perspective, it is composed of a potential duality of subject and object, the basis of all experiences – the Potential. From a third perspective, it is seen as a multiplicity of experiences, each of which is an actualisation of the Potential. An effort must be made to hold these three perspectives in the mind simultaneously

A common representation, also Vedic, of what is otherwise inexplicable is the symbolism of the highest god Shiva, who represents what in this book is termed That Which Is, and his wife, Shakti. *Shakti* is the Sanskrit term for power, and in this context the goddess is the experience-creating power. This power has two components: a projecting force that projects

an inner, unmanifest content into outwardness, and a veiling force that causes the I to identify itself with the projected content, losing its awareness of its real nature. To emphasise and reinforce the fact that the two, Shiva and Shakti are different and yet one, they are sometimes represented in a sculpture as a being half male and half female (that is, one side male and the other female). An analogous symbol is that of Radha and Krishna, the eternal lovers. Alternatively, the god Shiva is shown in sculptures in two contrasting attitudes: in one he is in deep meditation, and in the other he is dancing ecstatically.

This section and the previous one have been devoted to answering the third of the Perennial Questions, what is real, and to contrasting it to experiencing which is only dependently real. What is absolutely real is only That Which Is, or pure awareness. As the Source of the Potential for experiencing and for experiences themselves, it is the ultimate, real identity of both the subject, the I, and the Object, an experience. In answering the third question we have thus also answered the first, who am I. I am, ultimately, That Which Is, even when I am identified with a thing in an experience.

An adequate context

The answers to the first and third perennial questions have been found to be the same: the ultimate reality of the experiences which appear and of the I to whom they appear is, in both cases what has been termed 'That Which Is'. This provides the necessary context for the answer to the second question: what is the nature of experience. Such a context is necessary because without a single, over-arching concept, assumed prior to answering the second of the perennial questions, our overall worldview will be incoherent, leading to grave problems in practice. A context that does not transcend the particulars of individual experiences also fails to provide meaning and purpose to human life.

The worldview of contemporary global culture is an example of this incoherence. In framing this worldview a beginning was made by answering the second of the perennial questions first, that is, by formulating definitions required by the seven categories of thought. This done, the answers to the first and third questions were located within the world so defined. Thus

actual existents, time, space, and the person were all assumed to be ultimately real. The I was identified with the person. Incoherence and lack of meaning and purpose in human life have been the result. The history of the 20th century is that of being forced to face up to the consequences of this approach.

Notes

1. A thing can only be said to change if it has discernible characteristics or qualities in terms of which change can be detected.

2. Coomaraswamy (1993, p. 63) claims that the term 'That Which Is' was coined by Parmenides. It appeared later in the *Confessions* of St. Augustine (Underhill, 1911, p. 331).

3. The characterisation of deep sleep experience in this book requires further elucidation. When it is said that the deep sleep experience is of 'contentless awareness' it means that there is no content as there is in the waking and dream experiences. It is not however a complete blank. On waking there is a memory, 'I did not experience anything'. Such memory cannot result from the mere absence of the confusion, fear, turmoil and suffering that are a part of waking and dream experiences. A memory is necessarily of something experienced, even if that experience is of a feeling and not of a physical thing, and the subject of the experience is indistinct. It can be argued, therefore, that there is experience during deep sleep. This argument was developed by the eighth century Indian philosopher Sankara; for an account of this see Radhakrishnan (1923, volume 2, pp. 478-9). If, as argued here, deep sleep is an experience, and not a mere blank, then it is in essence the same as the other two types of experience and cannot be real – and it is not possible to consider it the substratum from which these other two types of experience emerge and subside. Pure awareness, transcends all three types of experiencing; it is the substratum of all alike.

4. This type of vision is technically termed a 'hypnopompic' vision. The nature and significance of vision and other types of insight are described in Chapters 3 and 4.

5. This statement needs to be elaborated. The Subject that has ceased identifying with the contents of experiences may choose to witness them, to participate in them. In that case he or she (the Subject) is a detached participant in experiences.

6. The use of the word ‘prior’ here is problematic because it has been said that time is one of the seven formative elements of thought, and as such only comes into operation with the experience being created. This problem will be ignored for the moment, but will be dealt with later.

2
Experience

In Chapter 1 answers to the first and third of the perennial questions were formulated. I now propose to address the second question – what is the nature of experience. In the following paragraphs definitions in respect of each of the seven categories of thought – actual existents, life, time, space, causation, the subject, and the knowing – will be outlined. They will be described more fully in subsequent chapters. Taken together, these concepts explain how an experience comes into existence and why it is just the way it is.

The seven categories of thought, it was said in Chapter 1, refer to general notions in terms of which any worldview must be framed. They are given categories of thought; they cannot be defined in terms of anything simpler in our experience, none of them can be defined in abstraction from the others, and they cannot be explained away. Each of them must be addressed. Any complete worldview must, for example, specify precisely what actual existents, or the basic units of manifest existence, are assumed to be. Some of these categories of thought contain sub-categories which must further be taken into account in the work of formulating a definition of the main category. These sub-categories will be identified and defined as they arise.

Episodes of experiencing

In the worldview now being proposed, the ultimate units of manifest existence, or actual existents, are not particles of enduring substance, but experiences created by units of process. An experience is momentary, like a flash of lightening, suddenly appearing and then vanishing. Whitehead has termed them ‘drops of experience’. The process is that of ‘bringing

forth an experience', termed an 'episode of experiencing'. It can be analysed into a number of definite stages.

Box 2.1 All things are as brief as winks

> The philosophers of the [Buddhist] Hinayana schools [contended] that…[all things] consist…of a series…of moments…of transient entities (*dharmas*). There is nothing that abides. Not only are all the particles of being perishable…, but their duration is infinitesimally short. 'All things are as brief as winks….' Their springing into existence is almost their ceasing to be. Yet they follow each other in chains of cause and effect that are without beginning and will go on for eternity. These chains, made up of momentary *dharmas*, are what appear to others, and in some cases to themselves also, as individuals – gods, animals, oceans, men, stones and trees. Every phenomenal being is to be regarded as such a flux of particles that are themselves ephemeral. Throughout the transformations of birth, growth, old age, death…the so-called individual is no more than the vortex of such a causal sequence – never quite what it was a moment ago or what it is just about to be, and yet not different either. The simile is given of the flame of a lamp. During the first, the middle, and the last watches of the night, the flame is neither the same flame not a different flame.
>
> (Zimmer, 1951, p. 513)

Experiences brought forth in episodes of experiencing are the sole, actual, ultimate units of manifest existence. In this book they are termed 'actual existents'. They are innumerable. In terms of their essential features all are the same: they are actualisations of the subject-object polarity that is inherent in the Potential. In terms of specific content, each is unique.

The sequence of events leading to the creation of an experience, or actual existent, witnessed in the vision described in Chapter 1, is the

general model that will be used in describing a unit of process, or episode of experiencing. First there arises an awareness of 'I am', the bare feeling of subjectivity. At the same time a vague, yet insistent, desire to be something definite also arises, a desire to be able to say 'I am this'. This leads to a groping for something that is not yet definite because it has not yet been created. The subject gropes among the indistinct multitude of subtle traces of past experiences that have been left behind on their completion. Grasping, or prehending, some of these, it then organises them into an intelligible experience through the agency of the formative elements of time, space, and causation. That experience, coming into view, and then immediately disappearing, leaves behind in turn a subtle trace, or 'karmic seed' which is subsequently available as a basic input for new episodes. These experiences follow one another endlessly like the successive frames in a motion picture film. The frames follow each other rapidly, creating the impression of a single, continuous story on the screen. By analogy, a succession of momentary experiences creates the appearance of relatively enduring things, seemingly 'out there', independent of the witness. These are termed 'temporal communities', or, more simply, 'things'.

Each actual existent begins its career as a brief experience in the present and then continues it as a karmic seed in the past. As a karmic seed, it yields up an impression of itself to subsequent episodes, thus returning to the present, in the sense that it becomes an element in a present experience. However, even though it returns to the present in this way, perhaps many times over, it remains as a karmic seed indefinitely.

The subject of an episode of experiencing identifies itself with a particular temporal community in a series of experiences brought forth to create a relatively enduring, seemingly independent observer of the other communities that feature in that series – the 'me' 'in here', as opposed to the things 'out there'.

This concept of actual existents derives from the Hinayana Buddhist concept of 'dharmas' (Box 2.1, *All things are as brief as winks*) and from

Whitehead's concept of 'actual entities' (Whitehead, 1929).[1] It can also be seen as deriving from one possible interpretation of Heraclitus' thought. For a discussion of this interpretation see Box 2.2 *Heraclitus: changefulness and momentariness*.

The totality of all actual existents is not a mere collection, but an integral whole. Each existent is immanent in every other by virtue of their prehensions of each other in the process of their formation. Further, what each one is is determined by a common cosmic causal agency that governs the creation of all existents. This agency operates within each of the existents.

There are three distinct types of actual existents: waking, dreaming and deep sleep. Their structure is the same but their content is different, leading to qualitatively different experiences. Dream experiences and those

Box 2.2 Heraclitus: changefulness and momentariness

In his writings Heraclitus used two symbols to describe the nature of experience: burning fire and flowing water: 'This world…was ever, is now, and ever shall be ever-living Fire, with measures kindling and measures going out', and 'We step and do not step into the same rivers: we are, and we are not' (quoted by Russell, 1946, pp. 53 and 52, respectively).These symbols can be interpreted in two very different ways which must be distinguished. One is that there are (relatively) enduring things that are constantly changing. The other is that there are no things, but only momentary appearances which, taken over a sequence of such appearances, are interpreted as things. The difference between them corresponds to the difference between an 'experience of a world' and 'the world as a way of interpreting experience'. The former is the way Plato interpreted these symbols (see Taylor, 1926, p. 2) and in this virtually all subsequent Western philosophers appear to have followed him. It appears to me uncertain which of these interpretations Heraclitus himself had in mind. The actual existents of this book are momentary appearances that are interpreted as constituting a world.

of deep sleep can, in terms of their content, be referred to particular subjects as temporal communities in waking episodes of experiencing with which the subject of those episodes identifies itself, giving rise to the waking thoughts 'I dreamed' and 'I slept'.

The things that appear in a dream and waking experiences are of four types: physical, mental, emotional and feeling.Physical things are objects like stars and bacteria. A concept is a thought thing, a fear of heights is an emotional thing, and hunger is a feeling thing.

Life

Life is an inalienable feature of the Dweller or, as we have more prosaically termed it, the Potential. Life is the impetus for and sustaining energy of an episode of experiencing. It is the primordial force that causes the Dweller at the Source to undertake His journey into outwardness. It accounts for the ceaseless procession of episodes of experiencing and for the progression of stages in the process of bringing forth an individual experience. The Rigveda, in an attempt to describe the nature of the Potential, or the Dweller at the Source, before its actualisation as an actual existent, or, in other words before potential time (night and day) becomes actual, says:

> …of night and day there was not any sign. The one breathed without breath, by its own impulse. Other than that was nothing else at all.
>
> Rigveda X, 129, 2, Panikkar, 2001, p. 58)

He ('The one' in this verse) is alive, 'breathes without breath, by His own impulse'. This ebbing and flowing of breath is an apt metaphor for the ceaseless coming into existence of vivid drops of immediate experience, followed by their passing into latency in the past.

An alternative metaphor is that of pulsation.

> The one Reality is not a static absolute as conceived by some philosophers. It is not a gigantic geometric figure laid

> up somewhere in the heavens, or rather in the void. It is living Being and the pulsation of its life continues ceaselessly even in, what might seem to us to be, the frozen sterility of the Cosmic Night.
>
> (Sri Krishna Prem and Sri Madhava Ashish, 1966, p. 74)

The 'Cosmic Night' here refers to a common symbol in Indian thought, that of the 'Days and Nights of Brahma' (see, Basham, 1954, p. 323). It refers to the concept of the alternation of periods of manifestation and withdrawal. In this book pulsation is the preferred metaphor to describe the alternation of the coming into existence of moments of experiencing and their passing away.

Time and space

Space as a formative element of experiencing comes into operation with an experience. An intelligible experience is possible only because of its agency. The various parts of a physical thing in a physical experience are 'spread out', disposed 'here' and 'there', thus rendering them separate, distinct entities. In a thought episode, when the thought is symbolised by a physical thing, its parts too are given extension individually and collectively they are given a set of extensive relationships.

A sense of time in a given experience arises from a sequence of similar experiences of which it is a member. In every experience brought forth there is a memory of similar previous experiences, and an anticipation of other similar ones to come. This sense of time in a sequence of experiences is thus derivative of the order of the experiences in that sequence as prehended by it. Within a particular experience, time is measured in terms of the regular movements of the various parts of a thing relative to each other in a series of immediately preceding experiences that constitute a temporal community. Or, it can be said that the qualitative sense of time is quantified and made precise by such movements.

In the intervals between episodes of experiencing time does not exist, except as a potential even though the 'I am' is not present to witness it.

The distinction between potential and actual time are recognised in many worldviews. An example is the Rigveda creation hymn already referred to.

> …of night and day there was not any sign. The one breathed without breath, by its own impulse. Other than that was nothing at all.
>
> (Rigveda X, 129, 2, Panikkar, 2000, p. 58)

In another ancient worldview, the Stanzas of Dzyan, we read that before the world was

> Time was not, for it lay asleep in the infinite bosom of duration.
>
> (Stanzas of Dzyan, 1, 2, Sri Krishna Prem and Sri Madhava Ashish, 1966, p. 44)

Causation

Human beings have always organised their affairs on the basis of their perception that there is some degree of orderliness in the flow of experiences. They have further sought to describe and explain this orderliness as comprehensively as possible. These explanations constitute the category of thought designated 'causation'. The two most common explanations are the theories of imposition and of immanence. In the former, law is imposed on actual existents from the 'outside'. This is a necessary definition in a materialist worldview such as that of contemporary global culture where actual existents are inert particles of material stuff, and where there is an 'outside' – that is, where space is conceived as another type of actual existent. The laws that are imposed are also actual existents. This is how Issac Newton conceived the laws that govern the harmonious movements of the planets of the solar system.[2] The laws exist apart from manifest existence; they are held in the 'mind of God'.

In the worldview being described in this book actual existents are created by living units of process. What these existents become is determined by a common causal agency that is inherent in each unit. There is no 'outside' since space is a feature only of an experience brought forth by the creative

process. And there is no separate category of existents termed laws. This agency is common not only to all actual existents, but to their totality as well. Each existent is what it is because the entire collectivity of existents, past, present and future, is what it is.

Before the publication of Issac Newton's *Principia*, in which the planets are assumed to be dead lumps of matter, all celestial entities, including the planet Earth, were seen as living beings, intelligent and able to move of their own volition. With the appearance of the Gaia theory today, with its mythical evocation of a living Mother Earth, we are being given a taste of the universe of the ancients. In these ancient worldviews – some of which are still current, more or less, in present-day non-Western cultures – each planet knew its place in the whole and moved in accordance with this knowledge.

In this book the term 'cosmic causal agency' will be replaced by the ancient Sanskrit term *Rta*.[3] The former is only too likely to be conceived mechanically, after the fashion of modern thought, whereas the latter refers to a living, dynamic, system of abstract organising principles. A living organism is a better metaphor for the cosmic causal agency than a mechanical device or a computer.

The subject

A variety of definitions of 'the subject' have figured in the worldviews of past and present cultures and cultural eras – a body, a mind, a soul or a combination of two or of all of these. That all these are logically untenable has already been suggested. They are all features of the experiences that are brought forth, whereas the subject of those experiences exists even before they appear and is one and the same in all experiences. The subject is That Which Is, but at each stage of the creative process becomes identified with one or another of the created particulars. That is to say, it sees itself as a 'something' that is defined in relation to the thing experienced. At the same time the subject forgets its aboriginal nature. This forgetfulness is the cause of endless confusion and suffering. That it is possible to 'unforget' has been affirmed by the seers and sages of all

cultures. Such a one can be *in* an experience, but is not *of* it.[4] In this book the subject is defined as a 'detached participant' in an experience. Like an actor in a play, he or she plays the character role assigned to him or her, but never for a moment forgets his or her 'true' (off-stage) identity.

Knowing

In this worldview what is known is an experience brought forth in an episode of experiencing. The totality of the experience is known. Other than this experience, there is nothing that is known. The subject of that episode of experiencing is the knower of the experience brought forth, and the knowing of that experience is the process by which it is brought forth. Knowing is thus equivalent to experiencing.

An act of knowing an experience can be of two types. One is knowing from a condition of 'forgetfulness' mentioned in the previous section, the other is from the condition of 'remembering'. These two ways of knowing are given facts of existence, sub-categories of thought that must be defined in any complete worldview. In this book these are defined as the ways of knowing of the person and of the detached participant, respectively. The detached participant 'knows' his or her true identity in addition to the particulars of the experience known. In the foreground, so to speak, is awareness with content, and simultaneously in the background is pure awareness. The person is forgetful of his or her true identity, and identifies entirely with the body of a homo sapiens, a temporal community, a thing.

Notes

1. See *Science and the Modern World* (1925) and *Process and Reality* (1929). Though similar to the Buddhist concept of 'dharmas', Whitehead developed his concept of 'actual entities' from the ideas of previous European philosophers. 'These lectures are based upon a recurrence to that phase of philosophic thought which began with Descartes and ended with Hume. The philosophic scheme which they endeavour to explain is termed the "Philosophy of Organism". There is no doctrine put forward which cannot cite in its defence

some explicit statement of one of this group of thinkers, or of one of the two founders of all Western thought, Plato and Aristotle. But the philosophy of organism is apt to emphasize just those elements in the writings of these masters which subsequent systematizers have put aside. The writer who most fully anticipated the main positions of the philosophy of organism is John Locke in his *Essay*, especially in its later books (Whitehead, 1929, p. xi).'

2. 'The [concept] of Imposed Law adopts the…metaphysical doctrine of External Relations between the existences which are the ultimate constituents of nature. The character of each of these ultimate things is thus conceived as its own private qualification. Such an existent is understandable in complete disconnection from any other such existent; the ultimate truth is that it requires nothing but itself in order to exist. But in fact there is imposed on each such existent the necessity of entering into relationships with the other ultimate constituents of nature. These imposed behaviour patterns are the Laws of Nature. But you cannot discover the natures of the relata by any study of the Laws of their relations. Nor, conversely, can you discover the laws by inspection of the natures (Whitehead, 1933, p. 117)

3. The R in the word *Rta* is pronounced approximately as ri, the i as in 'is'. The tongue is also trilled slightly in pronouncing the r. The t is a dental and not a palatal t. The a is pronounced as u in 'cut', but not as a distinct sound on it own; rather it is part of the t sound.

4. This turn of phrase is G. I. Gurdjieff's, quoted by Shirely (2006, p. 162).

Part II

The Method of Constructing a New System of Primary Concepts

3
Insight

The construction of a new system of primary concepts, or worldview, is an attempt to articulate the most general notions in terms of which we can understand, or 'make sense' of ourselves and our experience. These general notions were framed in the previous two chapters as answers to the three perennial questions. Seven subsidiary notions have also been identified - notions that must be taken into account in a complete answer to the second of the perennial questions (what is the nature of experience). In this chapter and in the next two we will shift our attention from the content of a system of primary concepts to the process by which that content is created.

The general notions exemplified by the concrete details of experience do not result from the operation of rationalistic thought, but from flashes of insight. Such insights reveal the abstract organisational patterns inherent in each of the details and in their overall arrangement. However, observing details and thinking about them – that is, the intellectual effort to 'make sense' of them – is usually the stimulus for the occurrence of insights, and delimit the areas of their relevance.[1] The insights are then embodied in the symbols of discursive thought or of myth in order to be communicable. Finally, armed with these renderings of the general notions, attention is given to the formulation of definite concepts. These concepts direct us to new ways of thinking about phenomena and new ways of addressing them.

This process as described above appears to operate in all areas of human creative endeavour. Its role in scientific discovery is particularly well documented; an instructive example is the formulation of the theory of the ring structure of the benzene molecule by August Kekule. The mere knowledge of its constituent atoms did not reveal its structure to Kekule. After wrestling with this problem unsuccessfully, he one day had a daydream in which he saw a snake seizing its own tail (see Box 3.1, August Kekue's

vision). This suggested to him a ring structure which proved very useful in further research. Other examples are those of Albert Einstein (relativity), Niels Bohr (planetary model of the atom), Sir Fredrick Banting (insulin) and Henri Poincare (Fuschian functions). The list of artists is even longer. The leader of the Indian independence movement, M. K. Gandhi, received the idea for the nationwide *hartal* (closure of all places of business, courts, government offices and schools as a mark of protest or sorrow) on 6th April 1919 in a dream (Tandan, 2008, Chapter 16).

Box 3.1 August Kekule's vision

…I was sitting writing on my textbook, but the work did not progress; my thoughts were elsewhere. I turned my chair to the fire and dozed. Again the atoms were gambolling before my eyes. This time the smaller groups kept modestly in the background. My mental eye, rendered more acute by the repeated visions of the kind, could now also distinguish larger structures of manifold conformation; long rows sometimes more closely fitted together all turning and twisting in snake-like motion. But look! What was that? One of the snakes had seized hold of its own tail, and the form whirled mockingly before my eyes. As if by a flash of lightening I awoke; and…I spent the rest of the night working out the consequences of the hypothesis.

(http://www.woodrow.org/teachers/chemistry/institutes/1992/Kekule.html. Consulted on 25th October 2007)

'Insight' is a catch-all term which covers a large array of little understood cognitive phenomena. The main types of such phenomena may be described to some extent, but there is no comprehensive explanation of why and how they occur – at least not any explanation that accords with the worldview of contemporary global culture. In the context of the alternative worldview being developed here a plausible explanation is possible, and indeed, will be described in a later chapter. For our immediate purpose it will be enough to offer a brief description of the main types of insight and to point out the general features that they all share.

The chief types of insight are intuition, dream image, waking image and visions that present themselves occasionally in the states between waking

and sleeping and sleeping and waking. Specific intuitions, images and visions generally fall into one of two categories, the individual and the transcendent, or, those limited in their relevance to a single experience and those that are relevant to all experiences, respectively. Those of the individual category are distinguished by their narrow, local context; they are recognisable as insights into the nature of a particular experience, pointing the way to a resolution of a personal dilemma, an internal emotional conflict, or may even point to a solution to a specific practical problem. At times they may provide a definitive resolution of a practical everyday, though transpersonal, problem or dilemma such as those encountered in scientific enquiry. For some types of these individual insights the meaning is immediately obvious, while for others it becomes clear only with considerable reflection, logical mentation and creative imagining.

In contrast, the context of transcendental insights is cosmic, far exceeding that of the individual experience. What they reveal is not directly or immediately referable to the situation in an individual experience, but to the collectivity of all experiences. It is these insights that are the raw material for myth-making, and for the construction of systems of primary concepts, and, accordingly, it is these that demand our attention.

Another useful categorisation of types of insight is between those without form and those with form. The former are what are commonly called intuitions; they are immediately grasped – that is, understood – without any effort. The latter (dreams and visions) are received dressed in a form that symbolises an abstract organising principle, and to get at the meaning of the principle one must know the 'language' of the symbolism being used and then be able to translate it, if necessary, into a more accessible language. In a modern context this means translating the message of the insight from the images in which they appear to the word symbols of discursive thought and speech. This involves recognition of the symbolic meanings of the images.

The language of images is universal, common across all cultures and cultural eras. That is, the capacity to create and use such images is universal. This is the language of myth and of dream.

A symbolic meaning of an image can be analysed into a core theme, and its representation in a particular context. The term 'core theme' (or

'primordial theme') refers to an unvarying abstract structure. A given core theme can be discerned in numerous specific instances, which differ among themselves in terms of how they are dressed up in a given cultural setting. At times they are dressed up after the fact in an effort to communicate them. If successful, the dressed-up core theme will catch on, in the way a new word enters discursive language. People living in cultures whose chief or most basic mode of understanding experience is the language of myth, converse routinely in that language. Unfortunately that language has largely been forgotten in contemporary global culture, but this is a loss that cannot really be afforded. It must be re-learned – or, more accurately, be recalled. Paying attention to current personal dreams and visions is the way to do this.

A distinguishing characteristic of all insights that establishes them as a class apart from all other types of experience is that they are 'given'. There is no apparent build-up to the insight, no apparent effort that can be said to be the cause of it. The occurrence of an insight is unexpected, though in retrospect its appearance is seen as an obvious response to an important need, a need which may not have been apparent before the insight came along, but which is illuminated – and met – by it.

Another crucial feature of the definition of the term insight being developed here is that it is not simply a confirmation or dramatisation of an antecedent emotional or mental experience. It is absolutely new. Writing in the context of the mystical way, Underhill notes that insights

> '…bring wisdom to the simple and ignorant, sudden calm to those who were tormented by doubts. They flood the personality with new light: accompany…the passage from one spiritual state to another: arrive at moments of indecision, bringing with them authoritative commands or counsels, opposed to the inclination of the self: confer a convinced knowledge of some department of the spiritual life before unknown.
>
> (Underhill, 1911, p. 269).

Intuitions occur in the waking state, giving an immediate, clear, and certain understanding of the cause of a particular configuration of things or events, or of the correct relationships among things. The intuition is always

recognisably a response to an antecedent state of mental churning, a struggle to make sense of a set of experienced phenomena on the level of logical mentation.

This is a familiar occurrence in everyday life. Thus, on walking into a room with several people in it who are silent and tense, one may spontaneously intuit the sequence of events that led up to the situation, or the relationship among the people that lies 'under the surface', and so understand the entire situation. Or, the detective who, looking over the scene of what appears to be an accident, suddenly knows that murder has been committed. He or she must then, like the scientist, look for concrete facts to support his or her intuitive conclusion.

In the construction of a basic or primary concept the writer struggles to give form to the formless though nonetheless certain intuition. Finding the best words and phrases to express the concept usually does not happen in one go. The early drafts are tentative. Discursive thought must then take over, appraising the representation logically. This appraisal may indicate that a particular construction needs to be modified or replaced. When this is indicated, but the writer is bogged down, further intuitions may come to help move the process along. The form that emerges is a concept for which an appropriate representation in words has been found, thus clearly defining it.

Intuitions may not come immediately when the actual work is in progress, but only later during moments of repose or when one is engaged in some unrelated activity. It is a good idea to keep a notebook and pencil at hand to jot down the gist of the intuition so that it is not forgotten by the time one sits down for the next session of writing.

Insights that come in dream are of the formed variety, that is, in the form of distinct images. The image may be of an everyday recognisable thing or event such as a person, a mountain, a river, a tree, a temple or a story. The meaning symbolised by the dream image has to be worked out. The image will generally be an embodiment of a primordial theme. It may have an individual or a transcendent meaning; in the construction of systems of primary concepts, it is with the latter that we are concerned

Occasionally such images occur even in the waking state, seemingly being superimposed upon the background of a waking experience or integrated into it. Again, as with dream images, the individual meaning must be distinguished from the transcendent meaning. This applies to the visual as well as the auditory (that is, to what is spoken by the images) component of the vision.

Visions, or formed insights, also occur in the fleeting intervals between waking and sleep, and between sleep and waking. These in-between states are of pure awareness, awareness devoid of any content. Occasionally, however, these intervals of pure awareness are interrupted by brief episodes of experiencing of a different kind from that which occurs in the dream and waking states. The difference lies in their lack of reference to any context; in other words, they are solely transcendent. Any individual implications they carry are purely derivative of their transcendent message they convey; what is a feature of the totality of all experiences must necessarily be important for every one of its constituent experiences.

Visions that occur in these in-between states represent entities which are abstract and thus formless such as triangles, squares, representing threeness and fourness, respectively, or zero, representing wholeness, completeness and infinity.

Sometimes words are also received in these in-between states, and even occasionally during waking. They are not heard in a conventional sense, or seen spelled out; there is only the certainty that they have been received. They are usually cryptic, not mere pointers to definite things or events, but rather suggestive of something beyond any possible world of things and events. That they are suggestive and not definitive is indicated by the fact that the word or phrase may not have been seen or heard before. Recourse must be made to the dictionary to find out if it is an existent word, and, if so, what its conventional meaning might be. From its conventional meaning, by a process of imaginative interpretation, and perhaps aided by further insight, its symbolic, transcendent meaning may be grasped. The word or phrase may be an archaic one, or in an unknown language. On top of this, it may not be spelled in the way the dictionary

spells it, but is similar enough to suggest that word – and at the same time it may point beyond it. It may be parts or two or more words put together incongruously. Where the word is heard and not seen, an appropriate spelling must be decided upon when it is recalled later – which again often may not correspond exactly to any word in the dictionary. Of course, inevitably, there are pointed individual messages also, such as 'wake up', 'it is time to sit up for meditation' or 'time to get ready for work', but these are not of concern to us here. Nor are the articulated inner or outer communications that so often give expression to individual obsessions - fears, desires, and negative emotions of all types – of concern to us.

In dealing effectively with the images of dream and the in-between states, they must be 'brought through' to the waking state where they can be examined critically and their significance allowed to come into focus. They are, however, often lost on the way. To avoid this it is a good idea to keep a notebook and pencil at hand, which means next to one's pillow, so that a brief reference, at least, can be scribbled immediately on waking and before the tumult of waking experience diverts one entirely. If turning on a light in the middle of the night to make notes will disturb someone else sleeping in the room, a small torch can be kept with the notebook and pencil.

It may be said that an insight of whatever type is a window on the inner structure and functioning of the togetherness of all experiences. Window panes are, however, sometime dirty with the grime of individual idiosyncrasies and concerns so that what is seen when looking at the window is a mixture of what is beyond and what is reflected back – what is transcendent and what is individual. By cleaning the window pane what lies without is more clearly seen. Were it possible to open the window a completely unobstructed view of what is outside would be obtained.[2]

It is now necessary to introduce a final distinction among the various types of insight. To continue with the previous metaphor, when looking out the window, it is possible to see what is outside. Are only the streets or the fields outside in the foreground seen, or also the soaring mountain peaks or boundless ocean in the far distance? What is in the foreground is the machinery that is responsible for the production of experiences,

that is, the working of *Rta*. What is in the distance is beyond *Rta* and the experiences brought forth, beyond the totality of all experiences, beyond even the potential for manifestation, are symbols of That Which Is. Here too it is necessary to discriminate between these categories, for to confuse them has been, as we shall see in a moment, all too common. To put the matter in a different way, the features in the distance, symbolising the Infinite, the Nothingness, or the Everythingness, or simply That Which Is, lead to an answer of the third of the perennial questions, those in the foreground to an answer of the second.

Three other types of insightful experience may briefly be mentioned. They are the experiences of synchronicities, pre-cognitive dreams and their analogue in the waking state, omens. These too, if recognised for what they are and intelligently interpreted, give a glimpse of the 'inner machinery' of manifest existence. Synchronicity also brings a realisation of the inter-connectedness of all phenomena, and the other two extend this perspective from the present to the future.

Notes

1. This is generally true, but there are occasions when an insight cannot be seen as relevant to current experience. Nevertheless, it does have relevance, only that relevance is to a wider context than that of the current experience.
2. I am indebted to Sri Madhava Ashish for suggesting this metaphor to me many years ago. He later used it as the title of a book on dream interpretation (Sri Madhava Ashish, 2007). However, I use this metaphor in a somewhat different sense than he does.

4
Interpretation

In the previous chapter an attempt has been made to define the term insight, to explain its essential function, and to classify as far as possible the different types of insight. Throughout, I have repeatedly referred to the possibilities of confusion and error in assessing any particular insight. An ever-present danger exists that the insight may be taken in a trivial sense and thus become misleading, or even counterproductive. One must guard against this danger. The best way to do this is to identify and describe, as far as it is possible, the different ways in which a given symbol may be interpreted.

Levels of interpretation

Every insight, whether formed or formless, can be referred to: 1) the individual I conventionally assume I am in a given experience; or, 2) to the working out of Rta that is responsible for the particularities of that experience; or, 3) to That Which Is which is beyond both of these.[1] All three are important, but in the work of myth-making and in the construction of systems of logical thought it is the latter two that are of concern. When an individual interpretation is used in myth-making or in the construction of a system of primary concepts, misleading myths and inadequate concepts result. Further, when the second and third types of interpretation are used indiscriminately, the result is also defective and misleading concepts. The only way to avoid such mistakes is invariably to distinguish these three possible ways of interpreting any given insight and then work at developing each of these interpretations. Each such interpretation can then be applied in its appropriate context.

An example of a specific insight may help to clarify this matter. August Kekule, as related in the previous chapter, had an insight that led him to

formulate a hypothesis about the structure of the benzene molecule. The insight was clothed in the symbol of a snake grasping it own tail in its mouth, leading him to the general conception of a circular structure. He interpreted this in a way that met his immediate need – the problem with which he was preoccupied professionally. One might conclude that the insight was a response to his professional perplexity, but such a conclusion would be premature. Like all insights, it can be interpreted from several points of view, and can likewise be considered a response to multiple concerns. At least three such concerns emerge in this case: a professional concern, a deeper, more general concern with primary concepts and a still deeper spiritual concern. Of these concerns the first and second relate to the individual, and the last to the totality of all individuals.

The first concern lies within Kekule's current experience in which his scientific interests are an important feature. Second, the primary concept that is suggested by the particular symbolism of this insight relates to the task of formulating an answer, or set of answers, to the perennial questions. We can only infer this concern in the absence of any record of Kekule's having explicitly addressed this issue, but we do have a good reason for doing so. The snake grasping it own tail is a universal symbol, encountered in most, perhaps all cultures. (In China, the snake is replaced by a dragon.) It has been termed ouroboros. In general it has been taken to symbolise circularity, continuity, wholeness and infinity. The first three of these can be seen as relating to the second of the perennial questions (what is the nature of experience), the fourth, infinity, relates to the first and third questions (who am I, and, what is real). The first three interpretations of the snake symbol thus imply the opposite of all the primary concepts of the materialist worldview of contemporary global culture, most obviously, the linearity of time and of all processes in time, and that disparate, enduring, lifeless material particles are the basic units of manifest existence.

As we have seen, Kekule assumed the individual interpretation of the snake symbol, that is, that interpretation which was useful to him in the pursuit of his professional interest in chemistry. In his pre-occupation with the individual concern, he is unaware of, or at least gives no hint of being

aware of, the other, possible interpretations. It is my own experience that every insight can be interpreted in all the modes suggested. Further, that each of these modes may apply to the individual receiving the insight at the particular time and in the particular context in which he or she does receive it. At least I recommend this as a working hypothesis; it may well be that all possible interpretations cannot be visualised, or their connections with the immediate individual experience cannot be made, but this will probably be due to the limitations of the interpreter. In Kekule's case it is as if the insight, is saying as an aside, 'Here, have a look at these aspects of this image as well'. Maybe Kekule was inwardly ambivalent about the prevalent definition of 'matter' as material atoms that was basic to the entire science of modern chemistry. After all, a consensus in favour of material atoms was not achieved until the end of the 19th century. If the ouroborous image had been accepted as pointing to a different definition altogether, the answer would have shaken up the science of chemistry based upon that definition of matter, and therefore exposed the irrelevance of his pre-occupation with one small detail of that science. As a materialist scientist he had a strong incentive not to seek other possible interpretations.

Another possible individual, though not professional, interpretation of the ouroboros symbol of Kekule's insight is that of balancing and integrating the various types of experiences – physical, thought, emotional and feeling things that constitute the totality of a person's life. In the context of the psychological system he propounded, C. G. Jung has termed this process of balancing and integrating 'individuation' (Jung, 1976, p. xxviii). Here too, we can only surmise that the insight was pointing to an inner psychic state of affairs; it could have meant that Kekule (like all of us) needed to be aware of the need for this process of individuation and of work involved to achieve it. Or, more happily, it could have been a confirmation of a successful movement toward, or the completion of, such an integration.

The ouroboros also symbolises a non-personal, or more correctly a transpersonal, movement to the realisation of one's real identity with That Which Is, the infinite. This aspect points to its equivalence to the mandala that figures so prominently in all religious iconography.

> Christianity adopted the ouroboros as a symbol of the limited confines of the material world (that there is an 'outside' implied by marking an inside) and the self-consuming transitory nature of… mere 'worldly existence' of this world, following in the footsteps of the preacher in Ecclesiastes 3, 9-14.
>
> (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ouroboros 28th February 2009)

Transpersonal insights such as the image of the ouroboros are a constant feature of all human experience. The message that the ultimate destiny of human life is self-transcendence, or participation in the Infinite in the form of what I termed in Chapter I a detached participant, is constantly being given in one way or another, and sometimes forcefully so. For the most part we do not understand such insights, nor do we have the strength to act on them and so they are ignored.

Francis of Assisi was a young man who did understand and act on his understanding.

> When this divided state, described by the legend as 'the attempt to flee God's hand', had lasted for some years, it happened one day that he was walking in the country outside Assisi, and passed the little church of S. Damiano, 'the which…was almost ruinous and forsaken of all men. And, being led by the Spirit, he went in to pray: and he fell down before the Crucifix in devout supplication…. And whilst he was thus moved, straightaway…the painted image of Christ Crucified spoke to him from its pictured lips. And calling him by his name "Francis", it said, "go, repair My house, the which as thou seest is falling into decay." …From this time he 'gave untiring toil to the repair of that Church. For though the words which were said to him concerned that divine Church…he would not hasten to such heights, but little by little from things of the flesh would pass to those of the Spirit.'
>
> (Brother Thomas of Celano, Legend of St. Francis of Assisi. Translated by A. G. Ferrers Howell, London, 1908. Quoted by Underhill, 1911, pp. 180-1)

Here again we see clearly the possibility of multiple interpretations, and in this case the recipient understood them and acted on all these levels simultaneously. The most outward interpretation led Thomas to toil physically at rebuilding the little church. This, as he was aware, was the counterpart of an even more important remaking of himself, or of striving to transcend his present unsatisfactory life and personality, his 'divided state'. This latter, if successful, would result in his becoming a living symbol of That Which Is in the worlds of ordinary experience. Of these three interpretations, the first two can be, in the classification here being suggested, considered individual, while the third is the most inward possible interpretation, entirely transcendental.

An important fact about multiple interpretations in general is also revealed by this story: that of sympathetic correspondence, or 'resonance'. The most outward level of physical activity generates energy, as it were, for the next level of activity, that of psychological transformation. This, in turn, propagates and augments that specific energy to the most inward (or highest) level, that of adding to and so strengthening that body of experience that becomes ever more available to and thus potent for the work of utterly transforming the lives of individuals imprisoned in the ordinary round of waking, dreaming and sleeping.

The pitfall of literal interpretation

On the path of constructing a system of primary concepts there is no greater pitfall than that of literalism of interpretation. In the previous section the basis for an understanding of this fatal misstep has been explained. There are, as it were, four degrees or levels of 'inwardness' corresponding to the subtlety of the interpretation of a symbol presented in insight: 1) the level of everyday experience; 2) the level of the underlying abstract organising principles that configure that experience; 3) the level beyond both experience and its underlying machinery, the mere potential for a world and its machinery; and, 4) the indescribable That Which Is. This misstep or error of literalism is a preference for a more 'outward' rather than a more 'inward' interpretation. How it happens will now be illustrated by two historical instances in which it appears to have occurred. These instances have been taken from Plato's

work. These errors, given Plato's status in Western thought, have proved disastrous for Western civilisation.

A brief reminder is, however, necessary at the outset. In the realm of science, the interpretation of a symbol in the most 'outward' sense is appropriate, and, indeed, the norm. The example of Kekule's interpretation in terms of the arrangement of the concrete elements of his immediate experience was cited in the previous section. Constructing a system of primary concepts, as has been said, is concerned with the second and third of the more 'inward' levels, while the most inward level is concerned exclusively with the realisation of that which is beyond manifest existence.

I have conjectured in the following reconstruction of how Plato came to formulate his concepts of actual existents and of a realm of discrete organising principles, or 'Ideas', entirely separate from that of experience. I believe I am justified in terms of what we know of insight and its role in the construction of primary concepts. We also know from his own writings that he received many remarkable insights which he attempts to communicate in terms of the word symbols of discursive thought. This conjecture seems to be supported by the following comment by Evelyn Underhill.

> It is curious to note in those diagrams of experience which we have inherited from the more clear-sighted philosophers and seers, indications that they have enjoyed prolonged or transitory periods of this higher consciousness…. I think it at least a reasonable supposition that Plato's doctrine of Ideas owed something to an intuition of this kind; for a philosophy, though it may claim to be the child of pure reason, is usually found to owe its distinctive character to the philosopher's psychological experience. The Platonic statements as to the veritable existence of the Idea of a house, a table, or a bed, and other such concrete and practical applications of the doctrine of the ideal, which have annoyed many metaphysicians, become explicable on such a psychological basis.
>
> (Underhill, 1911, p. 262).

The 'annoyance', I suggest, is not caused by the insight itself, but by the literal way in which Plato interpreted it

In the Timaeus Plato proposes that we assume the existence of an objective world 'out there' made up of finite, discrete objects disposed in three-dimensional space. These things are triangles and they are of two basic types, an equilateral and a half-equilateral triangle. These combine in various ways to produce the four regular solids, which are the four kinds of matter, earth, water, fire and air, of which all objects are composed. He thus proposed a system of atomic materialism, similar to, though somewhat more sophisticated than, Leucippus and Democritus who had suggested that matter is simply lumps of material 'stuff' in constant motion.

How did Plato come to define the basic units of existence thus? I wish to suggest that he worked up a simple vision he had had of a triangle or triangles, and that he took the vision in its most outward sense, committing what might be termed the error of literal interpretation.

The more inward meaning of the image of a triangle is simply that of the number three, and entirely abstract concept, in the sense that all numbers are abstract concepts. All number symbols are used in mathematical calculation and thus have a vital utilitarian value. But each number also has a universal, abstract symbolic meaning. One rendering of this meaning in the present instance is that the basic structure of the experiences brought forth in episodes of experiencing is three-fold: a subject (number one), an object (number 2) and the conjoining act of experiencing, or the product of their interaction, experience (number 3). That Which Is, in which the three are held, and also from which they emerge, is the zero, the no-number. This is the basic three-fold structure of every episode of experiencing. Such an interpretation would have led to a radically different worldview than that which Plato proposes in the Timaeus.

A still further possible interpretation of Plato's vision is that of the three ways in which That Which Is may be contemplated: the eternal, unitary, unchanging That Which Is; the Potential for an experience; and an experience. Either of these two more inward ways of interpreting his vision would have led to a more reasonable worldview than the one he formulated, and one

less likely to have led to a dead-end as the materialist worldview has done.

Plato also seems to have made this same mistake of literal interpretation in formulating the concept of eternal, static, multiple, mutually disparate, never-changing abstract organising templates – the 'Ideas' that exist apart from, and in a separate realm to, the concrete entities and events of the phenomenal realm of mundane experience. The Ideas, according to this theory, are thought to ingress into the amorphous flux of phenomenal existence to produce distinct forms, and at the same time continue to remain separate from those forms. The Ideas alone are real. They and the realm they occupy are cognised by 'pure reason', by which, I take it, Plato means what we are here calling insight. This radical partitioning of the world into a lower, shadowy, illusory world of everyday, and a bright, higher real world of pure abstract forms, has coloured all Western thought almost down to the present. In the early centuries of the Christian era Plato's fractured view of the universe was taken over by Christian theologians who merged it with the Hebrew concept of 'heaven' as distinct from 'earth'. In its religious manifestation, therefore, it is still a potent concept in Western culture.

It seems to me more than likely that Plato developed his concept of Ideas and a supersensible realm in which they exist from two common and inter-related types of insight. In the first type the totality of all experiences, what in this book is termed 'the togetherness of all actual existents', is revealed in a 'single glance'. Mystics and poets of all cultures speak of having had this experience on occasion. From their accounts it is an exhilarating, indeed, ecstatic, experience.

A particularly vivid graphic description of this insight is found in the 11th Chapter of the Bhagavad Gita.

> 5. By hundreds and then by thousands, behold, Arjuna, my manifold celestial forms of innumerable shapes and colours.
>
> 8. But thou never canst see me with these thy mortal eyes: I will give thee divine sight….

> 10. And Arjuna saw in that form countless visions of wonder….
>
> 12. If the light of a thousand suns suddenly arose in the sky, that splendour might be compared to the radiance of the supreme Spirit.
>
> 13. And Arjuna saw in that radiance the whole universe in its variety, standing in a vast unity in the body of the God of gods.
>
> (Mascaro, 1962, pp, 89-90)

The last verse, interpreted in the terms being deployed in this book, describes the togetherness of all actual existents.

Another beautiful account of this vision is that of the 13th-century Christian mystic Angela of Foligno, a disciple of St. Francis of Assisi.

> The eyes of my soul were opened, and I beheld the plenitude of God, wherein I did comprehend the whole world, both here and beyond the sea, and the abyss and ocean and all things. In all these things I beheld naught save the divine power, in a manner assuredly indescribable; so that through excess of marvelling the soul cried with a loud voice, saying 'this whole world is full of God!' Wherefore I now comprehended how small a thing is the whole world, that is to say both here and beyond the seas, the abyss, the ocean, and all things; and that the Power of God exceeds and fills all. Then He said unto me: 'I have shown thee something of My Power,' and I understood, that after this I should better understand the rest
>
> (Underhill, 1911, p. 252).

Plato's own effort at a pictorial description of this vision is the parable of the cave. As a myth it is not a very lively story, but does manage to convey the bleakness of the flow of experience of those who are unable or unwilling to benefit from, and to cultivate, insight in their lives – and the desperate need to escape of those who do. His description, and all such descriptions, however comprehensive and detailed, are interpretations expressed in the concrete symbols of myth or the word symbols of discursive thought (or a

mixture of concrete and word symbols). No effort is made to grasp the more inward meaning of this vision. That meaning may well have been beyond Plato and most mystics since they did not seem to have a concept of law as immanent in things and phenomena, and could only think in terms of law as imposed on things and phenomena from 'outside'. The upshot was to consider that the organising machinery of experiencing, in this case a bundle of discrete Ideas, constitutes a separate realm, distinct from that of experiencing, from which the Ideas are projected 'down' into the flux of the latter realm. The concept of law as immanent is implicit in the mythical mode of human engagement with nature and with themselves,[2] but that mode began to go out of fashion with Plato and his contemporaries. As it is beginning to reappear in contemporary global culture, we are, hopefully, less likely to make this mistake.

In a second type of insight the focus is on individual things. This takes '…as a rule, the form of an enhanced mental lucidity…whereby an ineffable radiance, a beauty and a reality never before suspected are perceived by a sort of clairvoyance shining in the meanest things (Underhill, 1911, p. 254).' Quoting from Francois Malaval, Underhill continues: 'From the moment in which the soul has received the impression of the Deity in infused orison…she sees Him everywhere…. The simple vision of pure love, which is marvellously penetrating, does not stop at the outer husk of creation: it penetrates to the divinity which is hidden within (Ibid., pp. 254-5). Again - this time quoting from the biography of Jacob Boehme by Matensen - '"Going abroad in the fields to a green before the Neys Gate, at Gorlitz, he here sat down, and, viewing the herbs and grass in the field in his inward light, he saw into their essences…. (Ibid., p. 256)."' It is this type of vision, literally interpreted as revealing the inner nature of a particular existent thing, instead of as a glimpse of the togetherness of all things, I suggest, that led Plato to atomise his causal agency into a myriad specific factors – the 'Ideas' – which act independently of one another. There were thus "ideas for things like crystals, trees, and people, as well as the intangible entities like beauty and justice. Not only is this explanation difficult to believe, it leads to difficulties in the work of constructing and effective worldview.

Notes

1. The first of these is the 'individual' type of insight, the context of which is an individual experience or a series of closely-related individual experiences (a temporal community), mentioned in Chapter 3. The second and third types of insight are both 'transcendental', the context of which is greater than the individual experiences.

2. Until about the 6th century BC the exclusive use of the concrete symbols of myth in describing the primary concepts of a culture's worldview was, as far as we know, universal. At that time there arose people in India and Europe who began to formulate their primary concepts in terms of the abstract word symbols of discursive thought and speech. In Europe the proponents of this new mode of thought and speech devalued, even ridiculed, and ultimately banished the mythical mode. In India, the new mode did not displace the mythical mode, but built upon it and offered an alternative and supplementary mode of gaining understanding.

5
Description

The purpose of this and the previous two chapters is to describe the method of constructing a system of primary concepts. In order to do this satisfactorily it has been necessary to: 1) begin with trans-logical insights which are the orign of such concepts; 2) describe the essential nature and variety of types of insight; 3) describe how these insights are to be interpreted; and 4) to point out the pitfalls in this interpretive process. These were the subject matter of Chapters 3 and 4. In this chapter we now consider the methods of using these (interpreted) insights to construct a coherent, logical and effective system, or worldview.

In doing this the following propositions are put forward: 1) there are two modes of describing the insights of the transcendent type, the concrete symbols of myth and the abstract word symbols of logical thought (see Box 5.1, *Two modes of describing insights)*; and, 2) neither of these is superior to the other; 3) they are complementary modes of expressing a culture's worldview.

Myth was the exclusive means of engagement everywhere before about the 6th century BC. In the West it was gradually displaced by logical systems of thought thereafter (See Box 5.2, *The displacement of myth in Western civilisation*). Today, however, myth is spontaneously reappearing in Western civilisation after a gap of some two millennia. An example is the reappearance of the mythical symbol of Gaia, Mother Earth, in the shape of the scientific theory of the living Earth. The sinking of the Titanic can be seen as the reappearance in a contemporary incarnation of the mythical theme of hubris and its punishment (Jackson, 2008, pp.76-8). This suggests that myth, far from being a primitive and dispensable mode of expression, is essential to the task of understanding ourselves and our experience. This conclusion is strengthened further when we take into

Box 5.1 Two modes of describing insights

There are two ways of articulating the concepts derived from insights. One is the language of discursive thought and the other is the language of myth. In the language of myth the concrete symbols of familiar everyday things are used, whereas in the language of discursive thought abstract word symbols are used. Both contribute to the creation of understanding, though in different ways. In describing the concepts in the new worldview of this book, both will be used.

Abstract word symbols have a static meaning, whereas the meaning of concrete symbols is dynamic. A word symbol is assigned a single fixed meaning, and to be useful it must in all contexts be taken to stand for only that meaning. Discursive language and thought are reasonably effective for describing the nature and relationships of elements appearing in experiences.

Concrete symbols are definite, factual elements (that is, 'things') of previous experiences that appear in later experiences in a metaphorical or allegorical sense. They do not deliver an immediate, cut-and-dried meaning. Rather, they

> think for themselves once we know them. They not only attract and light up everything relevant in our experience, they are also in continual private meditation, as it were, on their own implications. They are little factories of understanding. New revelations of meaning open up out of their images and patterns continually, stirred into reach by our growth and changing circumstance.
>
> (Hughes, 2000)

As a result they penetrate more deeply into the nature of the causal agency, that is, *Rta*, than word symbols can do.

Given these characteristics of abstract word symbols and of concrete symbols, the language of myth, dream, folktale, fairy tale, etc. is the more useful – provided the symbols are not taken literally. The strictly logical expression of meaning using the abstract symbols of discursive thought, however, has a valuable role to play in framing primary concepts. It can act as the critic of concrete symbol, and can analyse concrete symbol so as to draw out the essential, or core, meaning of a particular instance of the symbol, separating it from the cultural dress of earlier usage. This prevents literal interpretation.

account the obvious similarity of the mythic themes of all cultures and ages.

In India logical or discursive systems of thought, or discursive philosophy, also appeared at least as early as in the West, but never displaced the mythical mode. Indeed, it took over existing mythical themes, expressing them in an alternative language. Thenceforth both myth and systems of discursive thought continued and thrived, sustaining and enriching emotional, intellectual, aesthetic and spiritual life. Myth was the more general vehicle, informing the common life of people, while discursive thought satisfied the craving for intellectual clarity. Further, the champions of discursive thought participated, and still participate along with everyone else, in the myths of their times.

Hence the emergence of Indian discursive thought did not create a cultural discontinuity as it did in the West. More, by taking over the themes already articulated mythically, Indian philosophers did not stray far from the collective wisdom of their culture and hence avoided many of the trivialities and blind alleys of Western thought. It is only when a particular mythical symbol and the core theme which it endeavours to embody are seen as identical that myth becomes counter-productive. In a healthy society mythical forms are continually updated to keep them abreast of changing world conditions so that they maintain their relevance and power as answers to the perennial questions.

In this book, in formulating a system of primary concepts, both languages, that is, the concrete symbols of myth and the abstract word symbols of logical thought, will be used in an attempt to achieve greater clarity.

Myth

The raw material for the construction of myth is insight. Some recipients of insights are able to depict them in stories or other works of art which then provide means by which all members of their contemporary society may participate in the core themes. Participation is made possible because the insights embodied in myths are a latent possibility for everyone; the myth 'resonates' with that latent insight within every individual.

To express the same matter somewhat differently: the symbols by which insights are first expressed may 'feed back' into, and to a great extent, determine the symbolic forms which subsequent insights take. In the terminology of the alternative worldview being described here, we can say that a novel insight, appearing in an episode of experiencing, subsequently becomes a powerful, potential data for all further episodes of experiencing – 'mine', 'yours' and 'everyone' else's.

The process of depicting an insight as myth is a type of art. Some art is meant to entertain or please the aesthetic sense, but the aim of this type of art is to create deeper understanding. Thus it disturbs us in our complacency, sometimes frightening us with a glimpse of the ultimate meaninglessness of life as we now conceive it, sometimes suggesting a model of life as it might be lived, pointing the way to attain to such life, and the inspiration to strive for that more abundant and meaningful life. The most powerful artistic productions of all times confront us with the ultimate, unfathomable mystery at the root of all experience. Thus: the medieval European cathedral, the Sphinx, a Shakespearean sonnet, the Pieta of Michelangelo, the Sufi devotional song, the Psalms of the Old Testament, the hymns of the Rigveda, the Zen koan, the films *Star Wars* and *Titanic.*

Because myths help in understanding current events, such events, so interpreted, tend, over time, to merge into the mythical story, or, as the event recedes into the past, it becomes 'mythologised'.[1] In this way a traditional myth is refreshed or dressed up in a more contemporary fashion. The contemporary heroes and heroines do not replace those in the earlier version of the myth but provide a dramatic affirmation of the myth's continuing relevance to changing cultural patterns.

Myths sometimes ossify. If they are not renewed or updated in terms of their outer attire, they lose their relevance when cultural circumstances change and so become meaningless and ultimately die. If a dying myth is not replaced with a fresh version of the same theme expressed in a contemporary idiom, something vital to human welfare is lost. Worse, in its dying, and in the absence of an adequate replacement, it causes confusion and strife. Many people are unable or unwilling to forego the

security of an established myth as a guide to life, and insist on honouring it even though it has already lost its meaning for most of their contemporaries – because the conditions of life have changed. Such people become fundamentalists, fundamentally out of sync with their contemporary milieu. They are akin to those people in contemporary global culture who insist on a materialist interpretation of experience come what may; they are unable to accept the contradictions and incoherence of that worldview which are now being revealed.

Box 5.2. The displacement of myth in Western civilisation

In Western civilisation the beginning of the end of myth as a medium of expressing insights came with the earliest Greek philosophers.

> The critical philosophers before Socrates, the Socratic thinkers and the Sophists, practically destroyed their native mythological tradition. Their new approach to the solution of the enigmas of the universe and of man's [sic] nature and destiny conformed to the logic of the rising natural sciences – mathematics, physics and astronomy. Under their powerful influence the older mythological symbols degenerated into mere elegant and amusing themes of novels, little better than society gossip about the complicated love-affairs and quarrels of the celestial upper class. Contrariwise in India, however: there mythology never ceased to support and facilitate the expression of philosophical thought. The rich pictorial script of the epic tradition, the features of the divinities whose incarnations and exploits constituted the myth …loaned themselves, again and again, to the purpose of the teachers, becoming the receptacles of their truth-renewing experience and the vehicles of their communication. In this way a co-operation of the latest and the oldest…, a wonderful friendship of mythology and philosophy, was effected….
>
> (Zimmer, 1951, pp. 25-6)

Those people who are painfully aware of, and take seriously, the cracks that are now appearing in the contemporary global cultural model, and who do not subscribe in any way to mythical fundamentalism, are deeply disturbed. To some of them fresh vital insights are appearing which, if properly interpreted and represented, could lead to the transformation of that model, or, more accurately, of the worldview that informs it. But they are ill-equipped to interpret these insights adequately and so to effect such a transformation. In the first place they have not cleared their workbenches of their existing tools and the artefacts they fashioned with them. Secondly, they lack the knowledge and skills to fashion new tools and constructions, and have forgotten the construction techniques and lost the tools that might once more be useful. They are not able to read the language of traditional myth and have forgotten the methods of constructing new myths or refreshing old ones. These losses and lapses of memory are, of course, cultural phenomena and not individual shortcomings – indeed, they are encouraged and sanctioned by the worldview of contemporary global culture.

Systems of logical thought

It should be obvious, but is nevertheless worth stating explicitly, that there has to be a motive for undertaking an exercise of constructing a system of primary concepts. That motive is the recognition that the present worldview is no longer adequate, however adequate it might have seemed at the time it was formulated. When our experience is at variance with what our inherited concepts lead us to expect, we suffer 'cognitive dissonance'. This leads to intense mental and emotional turmoil, to real suffering. We struggle to find a way out of the contradictions that we encounter wherever we turn. In some cases, minor adjustments in practice, or more comprehensive changes in strategies, policies and theories that give rise to these contradictions, may be sufficient to remove the contradictions. But these adjustments and changes are merely attempts at reforming an existing cultural model. At times such as present, however, reform is not enough. Human social systems and the Earth's natural environment are rapidly disintegrating in spite of all our efforts at reform.

To reverse these trends a complete transformation of the prevailing cultural model and its underlying worldview are required. The starting point is the acceptance of cognitive dissonance and of the need for transformation.

Cognitive dissonance is indispensable to the process of constructing a system of primary concepts not only because it provides the motive for an explicit exercise but also because the mental and emotional turmoil that it generates somehow encourages, or indeed is necessary (though perhaps not sufficient) for the appearance of illuminating insights. Of course, one must be heedful of such insights and methodical in recording them, as best as one can, immediately when they occur. Timeliness is crucial for the clarity of a fresh insight fades rapidly. A big dream, for example, should be recorded immediately on waking, even if it is the middle of the night. These recordings can be cryptic, shorthand notes being sufficient to evoke a memory of the full insight later on. They are the raw material for the construction of alternative primary concepts.

Questioning existing concepts

> When you are criticising the philosophy of an epoch, do not direct your attention to those intellectual positions which its exponents feel it necessary to defend. There will be some fundamental concepts which adherents of all the variant systems within the epoch unconsciously pre-suppose. Such concepts appear so obvious that people do not know what they are assuming because no other way of putting things has ever occurred to them.
>
> (Whitehead, 1925, p. 48)

Whitehead's use of the term 'assumption' in this quote requires comment. A primary concept can be termed an assumption because we choose to accept it; we are not compelled to do so, or so Whitehead seems to think.

To be productive, cognitive dissonance must also lead to a systematic questioning of the primary concepts that feature in the prevailing worldview.

This involves first identifying and then describing each of these concepts, and also an examination of the overall system which they constitute. Random questioning is unlikely to succeed in completely clearing the building site of its previous structures. The three perennial questions and seven subsidiary categories of thought will provide a format which, if adhered to, will ensure the questioning is comprehensive. In other words, the questions to be asked are: what exactly are the answers given in the present worldview to each of the three perennial questions, and including specifically the definition given in respect of each of the seven categories of thought that constitute the answer to the second question.

Each of the answers so obtained should then be examined for its reasonableness, and the system (worldview) that co-ordinates them all examined for its freedom from internal contradictions, for its coherence, and for its implications for practice. This examination should make it clear what the sources of the cognitive dissonance are. The inadequacies of current concepts, clearly recognised, will guide the work of fresh construction.

If our present primary concepts are not recognised they will inevitably be carried over to the next stage of the exercise. Fresh insights will be interpreted and explicated using the concepts and symbols already employed for the existing unrecognised concepts. The entire exercise will thus be vitiated. The rationale for this statement is that it is highly unlikely that a logical and coherent new worldview can be created simply by replacing a few concepts in the existing worldview. A worldview stands or falls – passes or does not pass the test of practice – as a whole. An exercise in constructing a new worldview is necessary if even one of the concepts of the existing worldview is found to be inadequate.

Failure to recognise all existing primary concepts is only too easy. If a rigorous method of identifying and critiquing all present-day concepts is not followed, one or more of these concepts slips through un-noticed. To reiterate, the method being recommended in this book is the perennial-questions format.

In my experience the most difficult of the primary concepts of our inherited Enlightenment worldview to let go of is the reality of a pre-existing, self-existing world 'out there'. No major Western thinker from Hellenic times to the present day, including the 20th century process philosophers,[2] has recognised this concept underlying his or her thought. The European Enlightenment thinkers of the 17th century were no exception to this. In fact this was the starting point for their collective exercise in the construction of a new worldview.

Nowhere is this more evident than in the work of Isaac Newton. The planets were conceived of as 'dead' lumps of matter in perpetual motion.[3] Once this concept was adopted, Newton, like the ancient Greek atomists, found that he had no other option than to adopt 'the void' as a definition of space. His own formulation was that of absolute space.[4] He also put forth the companion idea of absolute time. Together they formed what Whitehead termed the 'receptacle' notion of space and time (Whitehead, 1929, p. 71). These three concepts – material bodies in motion, absolute space and absolute time – were the pillars of the more general, and un-stated, concept lurking in the background of a real world 'out there', pre-existing any observer. The fourth pillar then followed inexorably: the person who knows this world through the receipt of sense perceptions is an independent observer of this world. All four were assumed to be real entities. As for causality, the concept of law as imposed was inevitably followed. The category of life could not be accounted for except to say, rather lamely, that it is an 'emergent property' of certain complex material structures. This is the common ploy of merely naming something that cannot be explained, thus actually explaining it away.

A person in the materialist worldview, according to strict logic, is a material structure pure and simple. All the activities of this structure, its perceptions, thoughts, feelings, emotions, insights and actions are explainable in terms of electrical impulses, hormones and genes. And yet, for most people in the 17th century, including scientists, a purely materialistic view was too much to swallow. For them, the person is

essentially a non-material, imperishable entity inhabiting a material structure. It is a real entity in its own right, entirely different from and independent of matter. Slowly over the subsequent centuries this definition of a person as a non-material, imperishable entity has lost its sharpness, but nevertheless continues to be maintained, at least by implication.

The point of highlighting the plight of the concepts of life and the person is that they are the casualties of a system that was constructed by people who were unable to shed all their existing concepts, and especially the concept of a self-existent world 'out there'. The system is therefore not only illogical but also incoherent. This results in muddled thinking and problematic practices.

This critique of the materialist concepts could have been deployed in the 17th century itself, but it was not, and probably would not have been even today but for the frustration of scientists' attempts to find an ultimate material particle and their growing dissatisfaction with the 'emergence' explanation of life.

Another important issue surfaces when it is observed that scientists took the lead in the formulation of the Enlightenment worldview. Scientists are not primarily interested in more general issues. They do not have the patience, the training, nor the tools needed for this task, and so, if they are allowed to lead the way, the task is not properly done. Today, when it is urgently necessary to enter upon this work again, there is a real danger that this same mistake will be repeated.(5)

Framing of the first of the perennial questions

The importance of correctly framing the first of the perennial questions – who am I – cannot be over-emphasised. In Western thought this question has almost always been wrongly posed as: what is a person. This betrays a prior unacknowledged concept at work – that the I who asks the question is a person.(6) That this is a faulty concept has been shown in Chapter 1. To recapitulate: the 'I' that asks the question cannot be located within an experience because it exists prior to the appearance of any such

experience. It is the experiencer of all experiences, constant and unchanging amidst their comings and goings. The question, what is a person, focuses on the characteristics of an entity in an experience that is thought, out of ignorance, to be 'I', and thus bypasses the original question: who or what is this 'I' in itself. This is in spite of the most persistently repeated insight in human history – the insight that I am not such a person.

Thus, no worldview can be satisfactory that does not answer the first of the perennial questions exactly as it is framed here. Examples of where this was not done are the worldviews produced by the Hellenic Greeks and the later European Enlightenment thinkers who searched within the person for his or her essential nature. His or her essential nature is not a thing, that is, it is not anything that can be described, and to search for it is futile, not to mention wasteful of skilled man and woman power, time and money. This wild goose chase is analogous to the search by physical scientist for the 'ultimate particle' of matter. No particle, ultimate or otherwise, can be presumed to exist if it does not possess some identifying attributes or qualities. Any exhaustive, critical examination of the qualities of any 'thing' whatsoever reveals that they are simply indications of relationships among the things with which it is associated. And these other things also have no attributes. A 'thing' is ultimately found to be a reflection of all things, each of which is no thing, nothing.

Answering the first and third of the perennial questions first

The neglect, or misunderstanding, of the first of the perennial questions has large repercussions in another direction as well. If the new worldview is to be free of debilitating incoherence among its primary concepts an overall single, unifying concept must be found. Such a concept cannot be found within an experience because the concept must necessarily be of something larger than, and which exists prior to, experience. It must encompass all the experiences of the experiencer and also take into account the fact that either singly or taken together these experiences are, in the last analysis, nothing. Our unifying conception must therefore

be either that of the All or the Nothing. The latter can be discovered by exhaustive criticism of phenomena, and the former by answering the question, who am I. The All and the Nothing are mere words, meaningless in themselves, but they point to the ineffable That Which Is, the only possible unifying concept for a viable worldview.

Strictly speaking, That Which Is not a concept at all; it is beyond all possibility of conceptualisation

The search for a unifying concept via the route of exhaustive criticism can succeed, but it is essentially negative and there is the risk of our falling into nihilism and despondency if it is followed. The alternative route is positive, affirmative: I discover that I am That Which Is. This is the most intimate experience possible, and the least open to doubt. And, of course, it is not, logically speaking, an experience at all.

If the first and third of the perennial questions are not placed at the head of the list of sequential tasks that must be carried out in conducting an exercise in system building, and if instead we go straight to the second question, it will be found that, after having completed the exercise, it is impossible to rise above the individual experience, so to speak, to find a unifying first principle, or to find what is really real. Our answers will be confined to the contextual framework of our second answer; both the I and the real are perforce located within an experience as we define it. The sheer illogicality of any such answers creates only confusion and contradictions in practice. The worldview that contemporary global culture has inherited from the European Enlightenment is an illustration of this problem. Confusion and contradiction are its hallmarks – along with insecurity, fear and aggression.

Alternative concepts

When we move on to the formulation of alternative concepts, we will rely mainly on fresh insights, but not entirely. Other useful concepts, at least in essence, may be found in traditional worldviews of the many non-European cultures that still (though in many cases only barely) survive, and concepts that were once common important in pre-Enlightement

European culture but subsequently ignored. An example is the concept of law as immanent which is implied in all Indian Vedic and Greek mythology and formulated explicitly in the Vedic concept of *Rta.* This concept, which is the key element in the present work, is being reincarnated by present-day insights, notably those of biological and social scientists (see, for example, Selby, 2002). Then there is the spontaneous reappearance today of the symbolism of Gaia in a present-day scientific context. Some people see the enactment of mythical themes such as that of hubris and its punishment in catastrophic events like the sinking of the Titanic (Jackson 2008, Chapter 5). Recent political, scientific, financial and military disasters can also be seen as exemplifications of the mythical theme of hubris and its retribution – that is, as the self-correcting movements of a disharmonised state of *Rta*. Wherever one finds these ideas from other cultures and earlier cultural eras originally formulated in the symbolic language of myth, the myths must be intelligently translated if they are to help, and not hinder, our search. This is another reason for re-learning the language of myth.

Two concepts of the earliest Hellenic Greek period that were subsequently dismissed by Plato also find a place in the present work. One is the idea proposed by Heraclites that there are no enduring things but only momentary appearances; the only constant element in the phenomenal world is change (see Box 2.2. *Heraclitus: changefulness and momentariness).* Early Buddhist philosophers of the Hinayana schools proposedmamsimioar idea (see Box 2.1 *All things are as brief as winks).* The second is the concept of Anaximander and Parmenides that the manifest world can be conceived of as originating from one primal substance or principle. Philosophers of the Indian Upanishads had formulated this same concept, but took care to avoid the use of concrete symbols (such as 'water') employed by their Greek contemporaries.

These early philosophers did not always clothe their ideas in words that convey their meaning to us today, and where this is so we must make an effort to 'read' or intuit their meaning. In doing this, as in attempts to describe fresh insights in the word language of contemporary global culture,

the limitations of words will hamper us – to the extent that we will sometimes give up and fall back, like them, on metaphors and the symbols of myth. Examples of this are not lacking in this book.

Insight must ultimately prevail

The construction of a system of primary concepts is the work of logical mentation on raw insight. Or, logical mentation is the tool wherewith insight is described, interpreted, its implications explored, and it limits marked out. The mutual compatibility, or otherwise, of concepts deriving from separate insights must be determined. In all this, however, there will inevitably be occasions where the limits of logic seem to be reached. Or, in other words, seemingly intractable illogicalities will be encountered. These must be resolved if the process is to move forward. They can be resolved by: 1) the discovery of a mistake in the line of reasoning leading to the apparent illogicality; or, 2) the illogicality may be recognised, but not accepted as grounds for abandoning the original insight.

Whenever an illogicality is discovered, it is necessary to go back over the reasoning leading up to it, checking for mistakes. These mistakes may result from carelessness or from idiosyncratic 'blind spots' in the reasoner's approach. If mistakes are discovered they must be corrected, in which case the logical impasse may be overcome. If mistakes are not discovered by the person himself or herself, they may be discovered by others. If no mistakes are discovered, a decision to over-ride an illogical outcome is justified by the fact that an insight points to an aspect of experience that is beyond the grasp of the process of logical mentation. Needless to say, one must be certain that the insight has been explicated rigorously. If the insight has been embodied in an enduring myth or cultural symbol, it may be accepted in essence. In the case of an apparently unique insight (if indeed there is such), the recipient must risk a judgement: he or she can ignore his or her insight, or over-ride the illogicality encountered. In the end, it is clear that the construction of new concepts is not, and cannot be, pursued according to any exact, invariable set of rules.

In this book, several apparent illogicalities have been over-ridden. Where this has been done it has been highlighted and personal responsibility for doing so is acknowledged.

And then there is the related problem of 'wrinkles'. Sri Krishna Prem is reported (by Sri Madhava Ashish, personal communication) to have said that we should not expect to devise a wrinkle-free system. Like the carpet with a wrinkle in it, you can try to smooth it out, but all you succeed in doing is to push the wrinkle about; you can never get rid of it. The best system we can devise is almost certain to have one or more wrinkles – that is, illogicalities that cannot be removed or questions that cannot be answered. There are several in the system being described in this book. We must struggle to minimise their number, and then hope for the best. And be vigilant subsequently. It helps to some extent to know that some of our own wrinkles were also encountered by earlier systems builders.

All primary concepts must hang together

In framing answers to the seven sub-questions of the second of the perennial questions care must be taken that they all hang together. This means that: 1) they must not contradict each other; 2) they must presuppose each other so that in isolation they are meaningless; and 3) they must all depend upon what is considered to be real. The closer a worldview comes to this ideal, the more effective it will be. 'Effective' means that the worldview will be capable of accounting logically and unambiguously for all the phenomena that present themselves in contemporary human experience.

In the case of the worldview being developed here, attention to these requirements has been ensured by answering the first and third of the perennial question first. The answer – That Which Is – has provided the unitary conceptual scaffolding within which our system can be erected.

The definitions required by the seven categories of thought might, at first sight, appear disparate as to their origins. But they are, in fact, unified under the concept of the Dweller at the Source, the Potential for

experiencing. They are necessary as a group for the bringing forth of an experience; they are his Seven Sisters with whose help He actualises himself. And the Potential is none other than That Which Is.

The system here described is less than completely satisfactory. In one sense it is dualistic. The subject and object of an episode of experiencing are inescapable in any system that attempts to explain the nature of manifest existence. We have said that this duality is subsumed by the unity of the Potential. But the Potential itself is a member of another, larger duality. It has been necessary to say that That Which Is has two aspects, manifest and unmanifest. It cannot be said, however, why this is so. In essence, one is only reiterating that the subject and object is an ultimate duality and that we cannot say why it is so. In this respect our system is no different than the Indian Sankhya and European Cartesian systems which simply accept the ultimate duality and go no further. Duality is a perennial wrinkle: it will just not go away.

Nevertheless, we are justified in assuming a unity of the manifest and the unmanifest in view of the fact of their relationship, that is, of the dependency of the manifest on the unmanifest. But does this make any difference in practice?

Yes, it does. The contemporary Western worldview illustrates the weakness of stopping short at the acceptance of a subject and an object as ultimate principles. The duality thus frankly admitted percolates down into everyday affairs, appearing as the dualities of person and world, I and 'the environment', and mind (or soul) and body. It is one of the expectations of the worldview of this book that these debilitating dualities can be avoided.

Validation

After completing the task of formulating a coherent, logical scheme of primary concepts, or worldview, the task of validation or testing follows. This can be visualised as consisting of three distinct steps: 1) formulating secondary concepts[7] from primary concepts by deduction; 2) devising alternative strategies policies and theories; and 3) testing alternative

strategies, policies and theories in practice. The final worth of any system of primary concepts can only be judged by success in practice. Failure in practice forces us to return to the earlier stages of the process; as was said earlier, the construction of a system of primary concepts is an iterative process. Of course, not all failures at the testing stage are due to faulty primary and secondary concepts, and those that are not can be corrected on their own levels.

The range and severity of the failures of the current model of globalisation based on the European Enlightenment worldview is forcing us back to the questioning of primary concepts. Over the past three centuries much damage has been done, and by the time we get things sorted out much more damage will probably occur. The testing phase need not, however, require three centuries if we have an explicit model of the process to guide us. Moreover, the more astute we are in interpreting feedback from practice, the more quickly can corrections be made. Small failures need not accumulate to the point of creating a major civilisational crisis.

Finally, we must recognise that the task of building a worldview is never finished, nor is it advisable to take any holidays – at least not long ones.

The problem of language

> ...the sphere of logical thought is far exceeded by that of the mind's possible experiences of reality. To express and communicate ... [what is] gained in moments of grammar-transcending insight metaphors must be used, similes and allegories. These are not mere embellishments, dispensable accessories, but the very vehicles of the meaning, which could not be rendered, and could never have been attained, through the logical formulae of normal verbal thought. Significant images can comprehend and make manifest with clarity and pictorial consistency ... a translogical reality, which, expressed in the abstract language of normal thought, would seem inconsistent, self-contradictory, or even absolutely meaningless
>
> (Zimmer, 1956, p. 25).

Whenever new ideas are formulated in the language of abstract word symbols, or existing ideas are significantly modified, a problem arises. To define a new or modified idea it is advisable to use a new word if possible. A familiar word, however much we may struggle to redefine it, when seen or heard inevitably gives rise to a set of automatic associations which, in the end, determine what is understood. The purpose of an exposition aimed at communicating the new idea is thus defeated. New words may be invented, but even then the problem may not automatically be resolved. The meaning of the new term must be explained as best one can, and for that one has to again depend upon existing words. The problem just recedes. An awkward or inelegant word may be better; it may wrench people's thinking out of its habitual grooves and set it in a new channel.

One way to deal with this problem is to use words or short phrases that cannot give rise to any associations – if such can be found. For example, one of the biggest challenges in the exercise described in this book has been to 'define' reality. The terms 'The Absolute', 'The Infinite', and 'God', because of their existing associations, are simply not up to the job. The term 'That Which Is' has therefore been used. The aim of this phrase is to carry the thinking process beyond itself, to what is before any thinking occurs at all.

Another way to combat the tyranny of existent language is to import words from another language. The word is devoid of meaning until explained. Here care must be taken not simply to translate as a dictionary does, for that may defeat the purpose of using that word. If it is inexplicable in words, one might let its meaning crystallise gradually with repeated use without explaining it at all. Thus the Sanskrit word '*Rta*' is used here, but it has not been translated as 'cosmic order' or 'cosmic harmony' because these latter terms convey a fundamentally different meaning. It is hoped that the term 'cosmic causal agency' is of some help. Of course, an effort is made to say what *Rta* does not mean, which may contribute to its being understood in the way intended.

In the end, even with the best effort, the word language of discursive thought often fails us. It is then necessary to fall back on the symbols of

myth, metaphors, allegories and analogies to help us get our meaning across. Examples of this are not lacking in this book. These transmit meaning unambiguously irrespective of the hearer's or reader's cultural milieu and language – provided, of course, that we handle them intelligently.

The rationale for this methodology

It will have become evident that the rationale of the method of creating a system of primary concepts described in this chapter is the alternative philosophical scheme, or worldview, produced by following it. At the same time, the alternative worldview presented here would not be intelligible without reference to the method used here in its construction. A system of basic concepts, or worldview, is both the rationale for a civilisation and also its pre-eminent artefact. This is another way of saying that the process of constructing a new system of basic concepts is iterative; the worldview shapes experience and is shaped by the experience thus brought forth.

Notes

1. This process unfortunately obscures factual history. With a correct understanding of the nature and function of myth, it should be possible to keep the two separate.

2. Consider the following two statements. 1) '"Actual entities" – also termed "actual occasions" – are the final real things of which the world is made up. There is no going behind actual entities to find anything more real (Whitehead, 1929, p.18).' 2). 'The principle I am adopting is that consciousness presupposes experience, and not experience consciousness (Whitehead, 1929, 53).' These two statements describe the most fundamental concepts of the materialist worldview. In making this claim I take Whitehead's meaning of the term 'consciousness' to be the same as what in this book is termed awareness. Whitehead nowhere, as far as I can ascertain, uses the latter term.

3. This statement of Newton's was only the culmination of a trend towards pure materialism of the preceding century or so. Till then planets had

been assumed to be living, intelligent beings, capable of self-movement. Copernicus had definitely been on the side of tradition, and Kepler seems to have been ambivalent.

4. The concept of the void, or of absolute space, has been a problem for all succeeding generations of scientists. Given their materialist orientation, they found it impossible to account for instantaneous 'action at a distance', that is, the influence of one material body on another without physical contact. In their frustration they first postulated the existence of an imperceptible medium to fill empty space, the ether. Since no empirical evidence whatsoever could be found for the ether, it was dropped, and replaced by the concept of 'fields' (gravitational, electro-magnetic). There is, however, no empirical evidence for the existence of fields either.

5. Relativity, quantum and chaos theories are widely hailed as bringing about a transformation of the atomistic, mechanistic worldview. However, I do not find any evidence that the scientists who formulated these theories, or those who have followed on from them, have decisively critiqued the notion of material objects (and their derivatives, forces, radiations and fields) as the ultimate units of existence.

6. Here is another instance of failing to 'return to square one' in undertaking an exercise in constructing a new worldview. Defining the person as a body in a world is obviously a part of the more general concept of a real, self-existent world 'out there'.

7. Secondary concepts are derived deductively from primary concepts. In contemporary global culture prominent secondary concepts are 'competition' and the 'natural resources'. These depend for their rationale on the prior definitions (primary concepts) of person, not to mention actual existents and life. 'Self-organisation' and 'ecosystem health' are prominent secondary concepts now beginning to appear in response to the manifest dysfunction of the materialist worldview, but so far they lack a convincing rationale in the absence of alternative concepts of life and causation. In fact, they cannot be effectively deployed in the absence of an entirely new worldview.

Part III

Experience

6
Actual Existents

The ultimate units of manifest existence, or actual existents, are units of experiencing. They begin their careers as momentary appearances in the present. Having appeared, they then immediately recede into the past where they continue to exist as subtle influences that, together with the totality of all such influences, enter into the process by which further existents are created. These subtle influences are termed karmic seeds.

An actual existent thus has two aspects, or one can say exists in two modes. One is that of a momentary entity in the present, the entity that constitutes the satisfaction of an episode of experiencing. The other is that of a seed of latent possibility as to the determination of future experiences, lying in the past. The former mode passes into the latter, but an actual entity can and does also pass from a state of dormancy in the past back to the mode of immediate novel experiencing. In other words, a seed that is prehended in a new episode becomes an element in the satisfaction of a fresh existent in the present. What appears to be a passing from the past into the present, however, is only a figurative way of speaking. The actual entity in reality exists in both modes at the same time, since a seed, on being prehended, does not cease to exist as a seed. Rather, it only yields up an impression of itself in the act of being prehended. If this were not so, the seed would not be enduring, would not be available for being prehended many times. Further, a seed is prehended, positively or negatively, by every new episode of experiencing, and is therefore, in a sense, present in the 'now' of every existent that follows it.

An experience is the sole, ultimate, actual unit of manifest existence in this worldview. And yet, experiences are not given entities, as are, for example, the atoms (or sub-atomic particles) of the materialist worldview,

but are created by units of process, episodes of experiencing. And therefore it could be said that a unit of process is the sole actual existent. A moment's reflection, however, will make it clear that a process requires definite, enduring entities to manipulate and move around. A process of bringing forth an experience involves the initial prehension of the seeds of previously-created experiences, their processing into a single, unique new experience which is the goal and end-point of an episode of experiencing. The seeds, however, were created by previous episodes of experiencing. And so, it is evident that neither units of process nor experiences by themselves are the sole, ultimate units of existence. They are dependent on each other for their existence, and neither one can be thought of as prior to the other. It is a chicken-and-egg situation, and we have to accept as such.

'Actual existents' is a definition required by the category of thought that has been labelled 'the ultimate units of manifest existence'. In the process of creating an actual existent, a driving force and guiding presence are necessary. This force and presence is 'life'. There must be order in the process and in the experience that results; this is ensured by a unitary, cosmic causal agency termed *Rta*. The physical things that appear in experiences, to be intelligible, must be demarcated one from another. This is the function of space. Experiences must be ordered one after another in logical sequences; this ordering gives rise to a sense of time. Finally, when an experience appears it must appear to someone. This someone is the 'subject' of the experience. The subject knows the content of the experience simultaneously with the experiencing of it.

In this chapter and the next the process by which an actual existent is created and the nature of the finished experience will be described. The remaining six concepts, life, time, space, causation, person and knowing, will be taken up individually in subsequent chapters. It must, however, be realised at the outset that these concepts cannot be developed adequately in isolation from each other. All of them will necessarily be referred to in each chapter. This means that an understanding of these definitions will develop gradually as our narative proceeds, with a complete picture of the worldview of which they are parts emerging only at the end. A glance at the glossary from time to time will help.

The process of creating an experience

The process by which an experience is created is termed an episode of experiencing. It occurs in three stages: prehension, concrescence and satisfaction. These terms were introduced by Whitehead in *Process and Reality*. The first stage consists of prehensions of karmic seeds from the past. In the second stage the prehended seeds are melded into the form of a single new thing. This is then prehended in the final stage which brings the episode of experiencing to a close. This final prehension satisfies the creative urge initiating and driving the process. Such an analysis is purely speculative since even such insights as we have reveal nothing definite. All we have is the general feeling that, during the interval between the appearance of the I am and the appearance of the end result, an experience, there is a waiting period during which some activity is felt to be going on 'behind the scenes'.

'In the beginning' there is an arising in awareness of 'I am'. This is not, however, an awareness of 'I am this' or 'I am that', but only of 'I am'. There is no object only a subject. Of course, a subject cannot exist alone, and there is, in fact, an object, but it has not yet appeared. It is anticipated though, in the feeling of the 'I am' that it is alone. There are also feelings of insecurity, maybe even of fear or panic, and also of an overwhelming desire for 'the other'. Throughout there is, however, a subtle feeling of certainty that 'another' will appear, and that it is already felt to be taking shape in the background.

An object then does appear. I find myself a person involved in an objective situation. This phase happens suddenly, like the appearance of a milky precipitate in a clear super-saturated solution. The molecules were there all along, but not visible until the temperature reached a critical point or a drop of a catalyst was added. Precipitation occurs so suddenly that how it happens is not evident. Nevertheless how it happens can be inferred from the feelings that occur during the period between the appearance of the 'I am' and the appearance of the objective situation. These feelings are of 'waiting' and of 'activity going on behind the scenes'; they indicate that the formative elements of experiencing have been activated and are at work. Further, there is the certainty that an intelligible objective situation

will appear, and that I will find myself involved in it. I will also be a witness of that involvement; I will know the content of that experience intimately.

All these primitive feelings are indistinct and lack a context. They are 'free floating', proto-experiences. The one who feels and anticipates and that which is felt and anticipated do not yet exist as distinct things – the Dweller at the Source is on his way, but has not yet reached his destination.

Prehension

There is, as was said earlier, a desire for something, for an object. This gives rise to an anxious 'groping in the dark' for that something that is known to be there but cannot be seen. This is definitely not a passive waiting for the object to appear by itself. The process is analogous to that by which we struggle to catch an elusive concept: we know it is there, waiting to be seized, and we grope for it. We invest a huge amount of psychic energy in this grasping. Finally, we succeed and the concept suddenly 'crystallises'.

The energy that is expended in an effort to focus or concentrate attention in order to bring forth a world is termed *tapas* in Sanskrit. In many Vedic creation myths *tapas* on the part of the creator is said to be necessary for the bringing forth of an experience. (See especially Rigveda hymns X, 129 and X, 190 [Panikkars' translations are suggested; Panikkar, 2001, pp. 56-61].) In numerous other myths also *tapas* is resorted to in order to bring forth a desired state of affairs.

In the 'Darkness' the raw materials necessary for the construction of a new object are available. These are the latent impressions left behind at the completion and apparent disappearance of previous objects. These impressions are also known in various traditions as 'karmic seeds' and *'vasanas'*. '*Vasanas'* and 'karma' are Sanskrit terms, while 'seeds' is a Buddhist term. In our account the term 'karmic seed' will be used. This concept of karmic seeds effectively explains how one actual existent can be the cause of succeeding ones, even though it disappears before the next actual existent is created and thus seemingly cannot be a cause of it.

The term karma is usually used in a personal sense – a particular group of seeds is identified as the karma of a particular person appearing in a current experience. In this worldview a person is not an enduring entity and so karma cannot be 'his' or 'her' karma. It is general, and is available to all current and future episodes of experiencing. Its operation is also lawful, being subsumed by the concept of causal agency termed *Rta*. The content of every experience, as the karmic seed it leaves behind, contributes to a greater or lesser extent to determining the configuration of the content of all subsequent experiences.

On reaching completion an object brought forth in an episode of experiencing, dies, but does not perish utterly; it continues to exist as a karmic seed. It serves as a potential input in the formation of all subsequent episodes. Whitehead also terms these 'data'. It is these data that are 'prehended' by a new experience in the process of its formation. He uses the term 'prehension' in the sense in which it is used in zoology and psychology: the action of grasping or seizing.

A fresh episode of experiencing begins with the prehension karmic seeds in its causal past. 'Prehensions are the vehicles by which an actual entity becomes objectified in another…. They are vectors; for they feel what is *there* and transform it into what is *here* (Sherburne, 1966, p. 235).' ('Actual entity' is Whitehead's term for what is termed here an 'actual existent'.) Further, he says: 'Prehensions are what an actual entity is composed of: "The first analysis of an actual entity, into its most concrete elements, discloses it to be a concrescence of prehensions, which have originated in a process of becoming (Ibid.)."'

The source of the energy expended in prehension is desire – a desire for experience, a desire for the other, a desire or attraction that springs up with the separation of the two poles of existence, the Subject and Object. This desire in turn is a lawful reaction to the inexplicable primordial force that pulls the two polls apart, or, in the terminology used in Chapter 1, impels the Dweller at the Source to begin His journey. This force is life.

Every experience that has ever occurred is, as a karmic seed, a potential input for all subsequent episodes of experiencing, or, in other words, a potential datum to be grasped in an act of prehension. In theory any or all of these can be prehended; in practice prehensions are selective. Some are selected, many are rejected. The rejection of a particular datum is also a feeling-charged act: it is, in Whitehead's terminology, a 'negative prehension'. This can readily be understood in terms of our everyday attraction to some features of our experience and aversion to others. Many features are simply ignored, but this may be construed as rejection as well. It is, like a positive prehension, a feeling and not a thought.

A prehension is a causal act. A feeling for a particular datum reaches out to it from the prehending subject, grasps it, and carries it across to the subject where it determines, together with other prehensions, the content of the new experience. However, a datum is not literally seized and carried across to the prehending new episode, for then it would disappear as a historical fact and so be unavailable as a datum for yet further episodes. They can, however, and do, yield up 'copies' of themselves – any number of them – without in any way losing their potency for the future.

What data are positively prehended and how they are later arranged in the phase of concrescence, are determined by the operation of the cosmic causal agency, *Rta*. It operates in the seeds prehended as well as in the prehending new episode.

Concrescence

Concrescence is the 'growing together' of the primary data, or karmic seeds, prehended into the form of that which will appear in the new experence. In doing this, however, there are conceptually distinguishable steps. Prehended primary data are compared, grouped, and arranged to give a number of secondary data which are prehended in turn. These operations may be repeated many times, with a progressive integration of the original data to fewer and fewer secondary and higher-order data. This series of integrations culminates in a single final form. When this final

thing (datum) is prehended the concresscence phase, and the episode, comes to an end.

When numerous originally - prehended seeds are melded into a single composite datum, some features of the individuals are pushed into the background, or eliminated altogether, while others are foregounded. This is done to ensure that the final datum conforms to the pattern dictated by the current configuration of *Rta*.

Satisfaction

When all the grouped prehensions are grasped as a whole in one final prehension the process of concrescence is at an end. This culminating prehension is termed a satisfaction, since all desire for and grasping of data are over. It is a satisfaction of the initial desire for experience. And like all satisfactions, it is no sooner obtained that it is forgotten, replaced by a fresh desire. However, the satisfaction does not disappear utterly but, as explained earlier, becomes a karmic seed.

A satisfaction, like all antecedent prehensions, is not a thought, or a sensory image, but a feeling – the feeling of being involved in experience and at the same time a witness of it.

The intense activity taking place, unseen but nevertheless felt, during the period of expectant waiting that follows the appearance of the 'I am' finally ends with a determinate experience. At the same time, the 'I' who had felt itself alone now finds itself a thing in the midst of the situation experienced. But in becoming 'I am this', it has forgotten the 'I am'. This movement into forgetfulness that began with the emergence of 'I am' is now completed. Creation is also a forgetting.

An episode of experiencing is an organism

An episode of experiencing is not a mechanical process but a living being. As a rough analogy we may say that it actively takes into itself raw materials (data) from its environment, processes them and produces a finished individual (an experience). It is born, grows, matures and dies. Its

remains (karmic seeds) are recycled into new lives. Even the simplest episode, say an electron or proton, is an organism. It is an organism because it exhibits life, and life, in this book, is defined as the primeval force which sets in motion and keeps in motion the creative process. We confuse life with 'liveliness' and thus draw a line, arbitrary and not distinct, but all the same a line, between those processes that seem to be lively and those that are not. We consign a large chunk of the totality of all existent entities to the realm of the dead.

There are no doubt differences among episodes in the degree of 'liveliness', or 'livingness', that they exhibit. Liveliness appears to increase with the complexity of its operations. An episode that brings forth an electron experience, that is, in which the subject is identified with an electron that features in the experience, is as much alive as one that brings forth an ecosystem experience, though seemingly less intensely.

In view of the livingness of the process it is but appropriate to describe it in terms of the emotions of desire, longing, love, expectancy, satisfaction, and so forth. These emotions occur in all organisms, and are the best possible way in which the process of creating an experience can be understood – as the myth makers of antiquity knew, and as we today are beginning to learn all over again.

7
Communities

All things are communities Or, to phrase the matter more simply it can be said that all things, as far as we know, have parts, and are themselves parts of larger things. I say 'as far as we know' because however diligently we search we never discover an ultimate thing which has no parts, nor do we discover an ultimate community which is not part of a still larger community. Further, there seems to be no logical reason that compels us to assume an ultimate particle or an ultimate or final boundary. As a working hypothesis, therefore, we will assume that all things are communities.

Types of communities

There are three distinct types of grouping, the first is based upon obvious sequential affinity and the second on the affinity due to a particular shared-characteristic element. In the former a sequence of seeds is prehended, in which each seed immediately follows the previous one. This is termed a 'temporal community'. A shooting star is an example of a temporal community. In the latter the seeds that are grouped share a characteristic such as, say, a particular colour or geometrical shape (archetypal theme), or they compliment each other in some way. The individual members are not related to one another temporally. This type is termed a 'shared-characteristic community'. The common elements of everyday experience, crystals, stones, bacteria, worms, human beings, ecosystems, planets, suns, galaxies, are mixtures of temporal and shared characteristic communities.

Mixed communities of diverse types or patterns may form a community where there is a possibility of their coming together to form a coherent system. They are subsumed in such secondary concrescences by larger

co-ordinating structural patterns. Most communities are, in fact, systems. Indeed, it is difficult to think of a community in which similar individual existents are merely piled up and do not display any organisation at all.

Simple systems may, be integrated into larger, more complex systems by a repetition of the same process by which the original individual data were compared and grouped into more inclusive communities. This process may be repeated any number of times until large hierarchical structures are produced. A human being is a vast hierarchically organised n^{th} order mixed community.

A community, once formed, persists and, in future episodes, is prehended as a whole. Communities are the building blocks, as it were, of which future experiences are built. Thus increasing complexity may occur over a series of episodes.

Looking at a community in its temporal dimension, the members are all seen to contain a feature (a discrete element of the experience brought forth), that is repeated. Consider the example of a stone. The stones in successive experiences appear to be the same entity through the entire series, even though it is a different stone in each experience. This appearance accounts for the impression of a stable, enduring thing.

One type of change, however, is often noted from episode to episode in a temporal community when viewed over a sufficient range of its members. Take the example of a group of football players in action. The experience, or physical thing, is of the entire field, the individual players its parts. Over a sequence of experiences of 'the' field, the parts, or players, do not appear in constant, fixed spatial relationship to one another. Their relative positions change from experience to experience. The players are said to 'move'.

The relative 'movements' of parts in a series of experiences (a temporal community) are the manifestation of the necessities of *Rta* as it shapes and controls the totality of all experiences.

The relative movements of parts in a temporal community, where such movements are regular and repetitive, can serve as a metric with which to

measure time. Thus the position of the sun in relation to the horizon in one cycle serves as a metric in all practical matters in human experiences.

In contemplating communities the Platonic philosopher would say, as Whitehead does, that a common 'Idea' or 'eternal object' has ingressed into, and determined, the formal constitution of all its members. This, as has already been made clear, is a simplistic and, in the long run, unhelpful view. There are aspects of *Rta* that can, to some extent, be conceptually isolated such as numbers, geometrical shapes and colours, but they are really inextricable features of the whole fabric (or dance) of causation. The entire fabric as it is configured at a given instant is present in the original prehended data and in the compound, secondary data (communities) that take shape during the process of concrescence. Each of the prehended data thus 'knows' its place in the community. Each seeks out and abides in its proper place. It is in this way that many similar individual data are grouped into spatial communities.

All things are, in the first instance, temporal communities. A thing can never be known from a single appearance; a single appearance is too brief to register as an experience, but with the appearances of similar things in series of experiences following one another with no intervening appearances of other things, it takes on the appearance of a definite entity. This definite entity is a thought thing, irrespective of the type of the single things that make up the series; it is created by a reflection after the receipt of each of the single experiences in the series of the fact that it was preceded by similar things (except for the first experience in the series). This 'reflection' is a thought thing created by the concresence of the seeds of all the members prehended in one episode of experiencing.

The foregoing statement needs to be modified because there are always intervening appearances of other things in any temporal community. In the first place it must be acknowledged that the thing known is known by the subject of the experiences appearing in the temporal community. In the case of a physical thing, the thing is known because I see it, or hear, touch, taste, or smell it. The thing is first experienced, and each such experience is immediately be followed by another experience in which I

am seeing, hearing, touching, tasting or smelling it. With a thought thing, the thought first appears and is immediately followed by the experience 'I thought the thought, or 'the thought was my thought'. Everything that is experienced, whatever type of thing it is, is experienced by the subject of the experience, the 'I'.

In addition to this, there are also intervening appearances of other things of the same type as well as things of different types. In a temporal community of experiences that make up particular operations, such as cooking rice or sewing on a button, there is a mixture of all four types of individual experiences. There are the appearances of needles and thread and cooking pots, and also of smells of rice cooking and the pain of a pricked finger. What holds them together to form the temporal community (the operations of cooking and sewing) is the constant recurrence at intervals of the physical thing – rice or button. This will be found to be the case with most, probably all, temporal communities.

Emotional, feeling and thought things are also temporal communities in exactly the same way as the physical things. And they too, are interspersed with things of other emotional, feeling or thought things, as well as things of other types.

When a thing is experienced, that is, when it is known, the overall pattern created by its parts is known. It is, in fact, only because of this pattern that the thing as a distinct, unique thing is known. In that experience the parts of the thing cannot themselves be known. The thing of which it is a part also cannot be known in that experience, nor the other parts of the thing of which is a part. Thus a glass jar of toffees (a physical thing) becomes known as a jar of toffees by the pattern of relationships among the individual toffees. The toffees, in this experience, are not even things, but merely dimensionless loci creating the pattern of relationships among themselves that characterise the thing of which they are parts (the glass jar of toffees). In a subsequent experience in which a particular toffee becomes known, the jar is not seen.

Continuing with the same illustration, even when the jar itself is the thing experienced, it is not fully known. Only the pattern of its contained

toffees only is known. The jar will be fully known only when, in a subsequent experience, it is seen as a part of the shop counter displaying several jars of sweets of various kinds. What then becomes known is its shape, which is not a characteristic of itself, but of the pattern of relationships among the several jars that are seen as parts of the shop counter thing. In other words, a full knowledge of the jar is the creation of a community in which both the pattern of toffees it contains and its place in the display counter are parts.

To summarise: the experience of 'I saw a jar of toffees on the shop counter' is a thought thing, a community of physical things, a jar of toffees, individual toffees in the jar, and the jar on the self with many jars of sweets.

And finally, it may be added that 'the jar of toffees on the shop counter' is not solely a physical thing. Interspersed in the community will be other types of things: a feeling of pleasure in anticipating the taste of the toffees, and the thought and feeling of how much my children will enjoy them.

'The' world

'The world is in a mess', 'the world economy is booming', 'memories of World War II'. All these phrases give expression to our concept of a single world which we all inhabit. This concept derives from the more general concept of a pre-existing world 'out there'. There are two reasons why this concept is evoked so easily. The first is that the things in my experience carry with them the feeling that they have existed in the past and that they will continue to exist in the future. In other words, they appear to be relatively enduring things. This is because they are temporal communities, in addition, in most cases, to being shared-characteristic or systems. This feeling that the things in an experience are enduring leads to the generation, by extrapolation, of what may be termed a 'world image', a seemingly enduring context for these things. Such a background image is an accompaniment of every experience. The greater the complexity of the spatial communities that appear in an experience the greater is the complexity of their accompanying world image.

Secondly, each species or grade of experiences brings forth world images that are very similar to each other – similar enough, at any rate, to justify the concept of 'the' world. There are thus 'electron worlds', 'human worlds', 'ecosystem worlds', 'galaxy worlds', and so on.

The creation of a human world image is facilitated, and then further perpetuated, through the agency of language, a common worldview, education, technology, the media and so forth. It is accepted as an adequate general context for almost every future experience, and thus feeds back into a new generation of experiences determining to an important degree the content of those experiences and the world images they give rise to.

A world image is a thought thing, a temporal community. With every generation there are changes in this community, changes necessitated by current experience. These changes are usually minor and do not alter the image in any significant way. Sometimes, however, current individual experiences begin to diverge in important ways from the composite world image of the day. When the volume of such divergences becomes large enough, an insight will appear somewhere in the multitude of experiences that will gradually gain strength and bring about a significant, even a profound, change in the composite world image.

Communities as organisms

The individual members of a thread of a temporal community are continually changing from episode to episode, though usually not enough to destroy the appearance of continuity. If each of these is, for the purpose of achieving conceptual clarity, considered a discrete existent (for as long as it lasts), the best way of understanding both its persistence and its changefulness is to consider it an organism, that is, a community or a system of simpler organisms. It is ever-changing, growing in complexity, striving continually to maintain dynamic stability. It is born, grows, matures and finally dies. When it fails to perpetuate itself from episode to episode, it dies.

An organism is self-defining, self-regulating and self-directing. To carry out these functions an overall pattern of mutual relationships must be shared by all its constituent parts. In other words, the pattern must be intrinsic to each part. Each must 'know' its place in the overall structure, what it must do to remain there, and the ability to do what it must do. What is happening to any one participant in the organism must instantly be known to every other, and to the whole, and each must respond appropriately. This is the concept of law as immanent, of which the most adequate formulation we have is that of *Rta*.

Since we are speaking of organisms, the maintenance of a state of dynamic stability can be equated with the maintenance of good health. Any disharmonious functioning of any part of the whole system is instantly known by every other part and by the whole, and they react appropriately to counteract the disharmony and to restore the part to more normal functioning. The reactions may be more, or less, than is needed to restore harmony, and, indeed, they inevitably are, but a significant restorative effect is achieved, and is then followed by appropriate compensations.

Health is not an absolute condition nor is an organism ever in absolute equilibrium or static stability. There is only a tendency to approach these. Further, an organism is a growing system, growing in size and complexity. With every new generation the existing state of balance may be disturbed and an effort will be made to restore it. The new state of relative stability, however, is not a return to exactly the past configuration, but a new one. An illness, whether physical or emotional, if properly understood, usually leads to emotional growth. It leads also to greater insight into the underlying nature of things and events, leading to greater maturity and stability in the future. Of course, severe dysfunction can overwhelm the organism, leading to its premature death.

Occasionally the disturbance to an existing community is severe enough to cause a fundamental restructuring of the community, and the result is a new species of community, recognisably derived from an earlier species, but qualitatively different. There is a tendency for the new species thus created to be more complex, more sophisticated, than its predecessor

was. By observing a series of such transformations in the past we can say that there has been an evolution of form and function.

From this point of view, a 'mutation' in the form and functioning of organisms is driven by the stress created by circumstances. It is a correlated response of the entire system to the totality of circumstances, that is, to the requirements of *Rta* at a given time. And, the particular circumstances themselves are the lawful outcome of the antecedent state of the entire totality of existents. Both Lamarck and Darwin were on firm ground as long as they were only describing the evolution of species. When they tried to explain it they ran into trouble because they lacked adequate concepts of organism and of causation. Lamarck did not explain how environmental stress results in changes in form and function, while Darwin could not say why new traits spontaneously appear except invoking a concept of chance (Lewens, 2007, p. 44). Both implied that there is an element of teleology involved (Ibid., pp. 14, 50-5), but neither of them explained how it is supposed to operate. Moreover, Darwin led us badly astray, as it now appears, when he suggested that new traits are preserved in subsequent generations by the operation of mechanical, physical, single-factor causation – embodied in his theory of 'pangenesis'. (1)

The concept of the health of communities, when applied to human social organisms like families, groups of neighbours, trade and professional groups, inhabitants of an ecosystem, has equally important implications. Such organisms only function effectively when they are in good health. The term 'good health' here means the harmonious functioning of each individual in the group in relation to every other individual and to the group as a whole. It is usually necessary to reduce the requirements for ensuring good health of the group to some fairly simple, clear-cut guidelines for the behaviour of the individual. If the rationale for the set of guidelines is group health, those guidelines will have universal relevance. The multitude of cultural-specific guidelines, and the multitude of rationalisations for acting in one's own perceived personal interest, can only create confusion, competition and strife among the competitors – in a word, needless ill health.

Levels of complexity

The term 'species or grades of experience' has been mentioned in the previous two sections. A species or grade is defined in terms of the relative complexity of the experience brought forth. Thus there are human experiences, electron experiences, sun experiences and so on. Since an experience is of a community, we can also term these experiences human communities, electron communities and sun communities. A number of deductions can be made from this definition.

A community which is part of a thing can only be experienced as a part and not as the thing in itself. The subject of the experience of looking at an earthworm in a compost pile, for example, cannot at the same time experience that earthworm as a thing in itself. It can only experience the earthworm as it is in itself when its experience is an earthworm experience.

The same is true for a community more complex than the one with which the I identifies itself in a current experience, as, for example, the sun in an experience of watching the sun rising from behind a mountain range.

Every community is a hierarchy of communities of lesser complexity than itself. The 'lives' of these less complex communities continue to flow without their direct or immediate knowledge of the more complex community in which they are subsumed. Such knowledge is impossible for them as they do not, and cannot, be the subject of that more complex community as long as they remain the subjects of their own lesser communities. At most they are aware of the limits that define the boundaries of their experiences; these limits are simply accepted as given.

Similarly, the regnant community is not aware of the lives of the subordinate communities it subsumes. The scientist is as little aware of the electron which participates in his or her system as the electron is of him or her.

When a given species of community (or organism) fails to perpetuate itself as a subject in any current episode of experiencing, it becomes

extinct. The communities it subsumed do not necessarily also die. If they participate in several communities indifferently, and not all of these communities die at the same time, the subsumed communities continue to live elsewhere. The simplest, most striking example is the case of an electron and a dinosaur. The electrons in the body of the dinosaur did not necessarily die with the extinction of the dinosaur. In addition to the electrons that participated in the community dinosaur, atom, DNA molecule, red-blood cell, heart and stomach communities also did not die. If the dinosaur stomach community differed from the subsequent bird stomach community, it is in respect of details that change in response to the demands of the larger subsuming communities, such as would occur if the present-day bird is an evolutionary descendent of some particular sub-species of dinosaur.

The faint echo of a dinosaur experience from the past may well sound in a present-day human experience as the visceral feeling of aggressiveness (a big dinosaur) or fear (a small dinosaur). A faint suggestion of a dinosaur as a physical experience might just come down to a present-day human experience via an experience of some animal to whom a dinosaur appeared as a thing brought forth when dinosaur communities existed. The clear-cut experience of a dinosaur in a present-day human episode is the outcome of a long series of episodes (a temporal community) in which bones are found, arranged, imaginatively fleshed out on the basis of the way in which currently living animal communities are fleshed out. The behaviour of this dinosaur construction is deduced from its form by a similar long series of reasoning by analogy.

As the intensity of 'livingness' increases with the complexity of community, it is evident that the planet earth community, for example, is more alive than a human being community. And the sun community is more alive than the earth community. An earth community is more complex than a human community because it subsumes the human community and much else in addition. The experience of a subject in an earth experience is wider, its knowledge greater, and its understanding deeper. The environmentalists' plea for the development of a 'planetary

consciousness' is not to be taken literally, for it is impossible for a human episode of experiencing to prehend (the seed of) an earth episode. The so-called earth consciousness is a human conceptual construct (a thought thing) appearing in a human experience. That such a construct is valuable is undeniable; indeed, it is the very direction in which the demands of *Rta* seems to be pushing us. But it should not be mistaken for an earth experience.

The argument in the previous paragraph should not be taken to imply that the sun community came into existence only after all its subsumed communities were formed. Dinosaur experiences featured a sun long ago. And so do human experiences now. There is not a single line of evolution for all communities, but many. One of the earliest lines of the evolution of communities was: subatomic particles – atoms – molecules – aggregations of molecules leading to planets and suns. Other lines led to plants, animals and human communities. As these latter were formed they were integrated into the already existing, larger earth community, thus 'filling it out', making it more complex – and hence more alive. The degree of livingness of the earth has increased over time, and by extension, so has that of the sun.

Detachment

For the purpose of organising the everyday affairs of life, seeing communities as relatively enduring entities seems to be a necessary expedient. Problems arise, however, if their true nature is forgotten. The subject of an experience comes to believe that a particular community defines that community absolutely. I become a body, and to build and preserve an image of myself as an enduring psycho-physical existent, I cling to the things and other people that also appear in 'my' experience; I am driven, beyond all reason, to consider them real entities, and this leads to a sense of self-loss when these things disappear. I am also led to manipulate them without restraint to satisfy unreasonable desires, leading to their death or to the creation of monstrosities. These problems can be avoided if my way of seeing communities is understood for what it is – a mere expedient. I must be aware at every moment that I am acquiescing

in an expedient. This is the meaning of being a detached participant.

The way to avoid becoming addicted to seeing communities as enduring things is to create and then be guided by a worldview that does not sanction such addiction. In other words, a worldview whose primary concepts do not provide a legitimate rationale for such a destructive habit of thought is essential.

The concept of competition amongst human beings and their groups, for example, is a secondary concept arising logically out of the primary concept of the worldview of contemporary global culture that a person is a discrete, autonomous, relatively enduring, real entity. A change in that primary concept will invalidate the concept of competition, paving the way for the visualising of alternative ways of organising collective human activity.

The frustration of the physicist at the end of his or her frantic search for the ultimate unit of enduring physical existence is wholly understandable in terms of his or her perceived need for the personal security of an enduring physical environment. These negative emotions could be avoided entirely with a different concept about the nature of the communities that appear in his or her experiences.

Note

1. Darwin defined the term pangenesis 'as the phenomenon of heredity, with each unit or cell reproducing itself…. (Stone, 1980, p. 708).' It might be added here that any theory in which a simplistic causal relationship such as 'genes cause gross structure/behaviour' is misleading. The structure of DNA molecules is merely a co-variable, along with numerous others and including gross structure and behaviour themselves. The only 'cause' is the entirety of *Rta* as it is configured at that time.

8

The Togetherness of All Actual Existents

There is a togetherness of all actual existents that is not itself an actual existent, but which is an innate feature of every individual existent. Without this, no existent could become what it is, nor, indeed, become anything at all. Nor would it be able to interact with other existents in any way whatsoever. As a common feature of every existent, it does, however, partake of their (dependent, manifest) reality. Further, in a human experience the totality of existents can and does appear as a thought thing. It becomes actual, in another sense also, since it is a definite experience, an actual existent. But it can never appear as a physical existent in a human or any other episode of experiencing.

Wholeness and order

In the concept of 'the togetherness of all actual existents' two distinct sub-concepts must be distinguished. One is that of unity and wholeness, and the other is of the agency by which these are achieved. The first is the bare notion of the togetherness of all actual existents. This is ensured by the fact that every existent that is brought forth is immanent in every other by virtue of their mutual prehensions of each other, whether those prehensions are positive or negative.

The most powerful and beautifully expressed insight into the nature of the mutual immanence of every existent in every other is, I think, that of Plotinus. 'There' (his expression for what is here termed 'the togetherness of all actual existents'),

> …everything is transparent, nothing dark, nothing resistant; every being is lucid to every other, in breadth and depth; light runs through light. And each of them contains all within itself, and at the same time sees all in every other, so that everywhere there is all, all is in all, and each is all, and infinite the glory. Each of them is great; the small is great; the sun, There, is all the stars, and every star again is all the stars and sun. While some one manner of being is dominant in each, all are mirrored in every other.
>
> (Plotinus, *The Enneads*, verse 8.4, quoted by Sri Krishna Prem and Sri Madhava Ashish, 1966, p. 165)

The second sub-concept is that of the agency by which togetherness is effected. This in turn is composed of the bare notion of a system of relationships among existents and that of *Rta* which structures that system. The system is only one and is all-embracing. *Rta* functions in each of the constituent existents to determine the specific content of each and how that content is ordered. What happens in a particular episode of experiencing is determined by, and at the same time is a determinant of, what happens in all other episodes, past present and future. It is one comprehensive, integral system of law, immanent within each existent, here termed *Rta*.

Rta is not a static cosmic format or template, but a dynamic, living system, an organism in its own right, self-determining, ever-changing. A fuller description is given in Chapter 10.

The completion of every episode of experiencing is an occasion for the updating of the structure of *Rta*. What is achieved in an experience brought forth in an episode of experiencing is preserved, not only in the form of a karmic seed, but also because it is integrated into the fabric of *Rta*. Since *Rta* is a system of law that is immanent in each actual existent, the update is effected in each. In this connection it is necessary to recall that a seed is not a dead entity, but a living one, if quiescent, as the name 'seed' itself signifies.

Each newly re-configured state of *Rta* determines the exact ways in which each succeeding existent is actualised: it determines which seeds are positively and which are negatively prehended by any particular episode in the process of becoming; how the initial prehensions (or data) are processed; and, what satisfaction is aimed at and achieved. To accomplish the latter, it is active in the new episodes themselves guiding the process toward the specific satisfaction that must be. All these operations are joint transactions between the prehended data and the prehending, concrescing new episode. Both know what is to be done, and by whom, and they act on that knowledge unerringly.

Symbolic representation

The togetherness of all actual existents is a thought thing, a concept. It can never appear as a physical thing brought forth in an episode of experiencing. However, a thought thing can only become definite by employing a physical thing as a symbol. The physical thing is not the concept, but only suggests it, or points to it. This is the reason that the abstract concepts that are grasped in insight invariably appear symbolically as physical things. Thus, in the Indian Hindu tradition the totality of experiencing is often symbolised by the image of Devi, the goddess whose other name is maya, pointing to the changefulness, and hence to the ultimate unreality of experience. Another example from the Indian tradition is the 'One who breathes without breath' already referred to. This too is an evocation of universal being as a physical thing.

Albert Einstein dreamed of concretising the concept of the togetherness of all experiences of physical things in the form of one definite mathematical expression. This, of course, was a limited aim since it excluded other types of things, but it exemplifies the way in which the abstract concept togetherness is sought to be represented.

Another, similar example of an attempt at symbolical representation of the notion of togetherness from the field of contemporary science is the 'Big Bang' theory. The singularity that is said to have existed prior to the explosion is a thought thing, a version of the concept of togetherness. The

explosion is another physical thing symbolising the singularity. The scientist experiencing various physical things is led to an insight of their togetherness, which is a thought thing, but immediately, automatically, is further led to the bringing forth of a meaningful experience in which a physical thing symbolises this thought thing. This symbolic physical thing then becomes the backdrop of all his or her further thinking about the behaviour of the thought thing he or she experienced initially and which was the occasion for the insight.

Since the topic of the symbolic representation of thought things has come up, it will not be out of place to go back to the discussion of insight in Chapter 3 and carry it forward. Insights are the irruption into experience of the abstract patterns underlying and determining or controlling the phenomena of experience, patterns that cannot be 'seen' in the phenomena themselves. As abstractions they cannot be cognised directly and so are dressed up as physical things. Feeling and emotional things also appear as physical things employed symbolically. Intuitions are initially experienced as thought or feeling things, and then, in immediately succeeding experiences, find embodiment as physical things. These physical things are not symbolical, but actual.

All so-called thinking is the way in which these physical things, symbolic and actual, are manipulated. This manipulation is not done by a thinker; there is no thinker, only thinking. Manipulation is the expression of the necessities of *Rta* in the context of a given experience or series of similar experiences.

Other attempts to formulate a concept of togetherness

The concept of the togetherness of all actual existents is essential to a full definition of an individual existent. The concept of the 'many' presupposes the concept of the 'one'. In the worldview being described here the 'one' is defined in terms of the two concepts of mutual immanence and of *Rta.* When these concepts are not formulated at the beginning, it is necessary to attempt to bring the many together 'after the fact', as it were. In the worldview described in the *Timaeus* atoms are causally

independent of each other and so too are their abstract, organising, primordial themes. Further, there is a complete disjunction between the realm of actual existents (atoms) and the realm of organising themes (the 'Ideas') that act on them. To bridge this gap and introduce a mechanism of causal agency, Plato offers the concept of the Receptacle or Locus. Whitehead has paraphrased Plato's description of this as follows.

> In addition to the notions of the welter of events and of forms which they illustrate, we require a third term…unity. It is a perplexed and obscure concept. We must conceive it the receptacle, the foster-mother as I might say, of the becoming of our occasions of experience. This …identity is the thing which receives all occasions of …experience. It is there as a natural matrix for all transitions of…[experience], and is changed and variously figured by the things that enter into it; so that it differs in its character at different times. Since it receives all manner of experiences into its own unity, it must itself be bare of all forms. We shall not be far wrong if we describe it as invisible, formless, and all-receptive. It is a locus which persists, and provides an emplacement for all the occasions of experience. That which happens in it is conditioned by the compulsion of its own past, and by the persuasion of its immanent ideals….[Its] sole function is the imposition of a unity upon the events of Nature. These events are together by reason of their community of locus, and they obtain their actuality by reason of emplacement within this community.
>
> (Whitehead, 1933, pp. 189-90)

Plato begins the formulation of his worldview by adopting the concept of law as imposed, but then with this concept of the Receptacle he appears to suggest that law is in effect immanent. Further, he suggests that all his separate Ideas are co-ordinated to give a single causal agency, and that atoms are related even if not mutually immanent. I personally do not think this *ad hoc* measure to create a togetherness of all existents is convincing.

It is simply impossible, I would say, to develop a viable concept of togetherness after having initially put forward the concept of apartness. It was perhaps the greatest single misstep in the history of human thought to have abandoned the concept of fate which featured in Greek mythology, rather than to attempt to extend and clarify it.

Whitehead, in eschewing Plato's concept of material atoms, has gone some way to making the task of formulating a concept of togetherness easier. However, he accepts Plato's concept of imposed Ideas, or of law as imposed, to begin with – and thus saddles himself with a serious handicap.

Briefly, he adopts two concepts in an attempt to unify his collection of actual existents. One is an additional process of experiencing termed 'God'. In this process, all existent seeds are positively prehended, and at the same time the totality of Ideas (or eternal objects, as Whitehead calls them) is also positively prehended as one single unit. In the concrescence phase the two sets of prehensions are integrated. This results in the unlimited potentiality of the totality of eternal objects for the determination of future experiences being limited by the definiteness of the actual existents from the past that are available as data for prehension. The limitations will alter with each subsequent God episode.

The second concept is that of the extensive continuum. I will present this notion in Whitehead's own words. The notion of the extensive continuum, he says, is that

> of pure, or general, potentiality. The general potentiality 'is the bundle of possibilities, mutually consistent or alternative, provided by the multiplicity of eternal objects'…it is the realm of eternal objects considered in itself apart from any limitations other than logical ones, that might be put upon ingression into the world. But there *are*, in fact, limitations put upon ingression into the world not only by logic, but by past circumstances. Real potentiality is the limitations, the restrictions upon pure potentiality, that the conditions of a given, factual world impose upon any particular actual entity

> arising out of that world. The extensive continuum 'is that first determination of order – that is, of real potentiality – arising out of the general character of the world.'
>
> (Sherburne, 1966, pp. 223-4)

The 'bundle' of multiple eternal objects appears to be a mere collection, and not a living, organic entity, and as such the creation of actual existents cannot logically be conceived as being due to the operation of law as immanent. His concept of togetherness could have been simpler, more elegant and logically satisfying if he had abandoned Plato at the outset and said unambiguously that the Ideas are only aspects of a unitary cosmic causal agency – what in this book have been termed core or primordial themes.

The danger of failing to examine critically every last one of one's inherited concepts when embarking upon a fresh exercise of constructing a new worldview has already been pointed out. The concept of a world 'out there' as an actual existent is one example. Another is of Whitehead taking on Plato's concept of Ideas uncritically. But Plato fell into the other pitfall of uncritically rejecting all inherited concepts. He began by rejecting the concept of fate. This concept could have been used by him to give a simpler, more elegant, and hence more plausible worldview.

9
Life

> The One is perfect, that is it has nothing, seeks nothing, needs nothing but, as we may say, it overflows and this overflowing is creative.
>
> (Plotinus, *The Enneads*, 5,2,1, Quoted by Sri Krishna Prem and Sri Madhava Ashsish, 1966, p. 84)

The movement into outwardness that brings forth an experience is termed life. It carries karmic seeds of past and future experiences into manifestation as a new experience. In the creation imagery used earlier, life is the energy that impels the Dweller at the Source on His journey and sustains Him throughout. At first sight this is a more active representation than Plotinus' 'overflowing'. However, there can be no overflowing without a previous build up of energy in a confined space. Here the term energy is used in its common, everyday sense of 'she is full of energy', and not in the sense in which it is used by present-day scientists – the property of matter (that is radiation, the emission of electromagnetic waves or subatomic particles). The cosmic creative energy is not the property of anything else, it is primordial, uncaused, a brute fact that cannot be explained in terms of anything simpler or prior. Indeed it exists before, and independently of, the things that appear in an experience. This must be so, for life is one of the seven categories of thought; without it no adequate conception of manifestation is possible. The best that can be done is to offer a number of symbolic statements in an effort to illuminate various facets of the movement into manifestation.

Everything is alive

The Potential is a living being: 'The one breathed without breath, by its

own impulse.'[1] It follows that an episode of experiencing is a living process whether the experience brought forth by that episode is an electron experience, a human experience or a milky-way experience. The temporal communities that appear in experiences are also alive. It is necessary to emphasise this point because modern process philosophers, following Whitehead, consider the process of the bringing forth of an experience as entirely mechanical, non-living. In other words, their worldview is constructed without the participation of the formative element life at the stage of articulating primary concepts. In this way they are but conforming to the materialist mindset of the 17th-century.

No worldview can, of course, altogether ignore the category of life. Taking their cue again from Whitehead, 20th-century process philosophers, as an after-thought, it seems, admit it – illegitimately – as an emergent property of mechanical process. Life for them is not an innate feature of an episode experiencing. It is recognised as a feature of only some communities brought forth by it. These are complex communities, that is, communities that are composed of a number of diverse types of simpler communities which together function as a system, and exhibit behaviour that cannot always be predicted from knowledge of the characteristics of these simpler communities.

To repeat then: in the view being advanced here every episode of experiencing is a living unit of process. Every community brought forth, from the simplest to the most complex, is a living being. Life is the energy that brings experiences, and the communities within which they appear, into existence. It is latent in karmic seeds and becomes manifest when they germinate.

There are, of course, differences among episodes and communities in the intensity of the 'livingness' they display. In the simplest, a purely temporal community, repetitive monotony is the predominant tone. An electron continues to be what it was and to act in relation to other electrons as it acted in the past. Nothing unexpected or novel is ever likely to happens to it. With more complex spatial and temporal communities, unexpectedness from one generation to the next becomes a noticeable feature.

Consequently they appear more alive. At high levels of complexity the unexpected can be truly bewildering. From the electron to the planet earth complexity increases. In the scale electron — atom – molecule – crystal – cell – human being – ecosystem – planet earth, each successive element is more alive than the one preceding it.

In parenthesis it is well to add that the unexpectedness from generation to generation of experiences brought forth, and in the form and functioning of the communities that feature in these experiences, is not due to chance. Every change that occurs is the working out of the causal necessity that rules all manifestation, namely *Rta*. If a change appears unexpectedly it is only because from the limited perspective of any one experience the totality of *Rta* is not precisely knowable.

The flowing and ebbing of life

The symbol of the 'One who breathed without breath' suggests that the creative out-flowing is not a constant, but an intermittent movement. There is an outward or downward movement which ends in the creation of an experience. Then the flow of life energy ebbs and reverses itself, as it were, back to the Source and that experience ends. These two movements are represented symbolically by the out-flowing and in-flowing breath, respectively. Life thus flows and ebbs, flows and ebbs, without end – or beginning. The flowing and ebbing are the manifest aspect of the ever-existent One who, as unmanifest potential, 'breathes without breath'.

The maximum point of in-breath (before the appearance of the 'I am') and the ending of the out-breath (the appearance of an experience) are the times when the direction of flow reverses itself. Ordinarily, the world seems to disappear abruptly the moment it appears, but if we had an insight into this point in the overall process of the comings and goings of worlds, we might find that it gradually dissolves or fades from view, so to speak. With this insight, the appearance of an experience is seen to occur over a definite interval of time, and so too might its disappearance be seen.

The succession of the seasons can be taken as a metaphor for the ceaseless pulsation of manifestation. The outflow of life commences at the spring equinox and ends at the autumn equinox, and its inflow begins at the autumn equinox and ends at the spring equinox. The points where the flow reverses itself, however, are the winter solstice when the sun begins its Southerly journey, and the summer solstice when it begins its return to the North.

Another metaphor is the alternation of day and night. At dawn the strengthening light brings into view a world of forms, and at evening twilight that world disappears as it slides into darkness. But the reversals of polarity occur at midnight and midday. The process by which the world that appears at dawn begins to flow at midnight, and proceeds 'in the dark' or 'behind the scenes', so to speak, and the ebbing of the current begins at midday. The ebbing is also not overt before the evening twilight, but its presence is indicated by the feeling of sleepiness and by the greater effort required to be attentive to our work in the afternoon as compared to the morning. This and the previous metaphor are suggested by Sri Krishna Prem and Sri Madhava Ashish (1966, pp. 82-85).

Overflowing

Plotinus' metaphor of a vessel becoming full and overflowing suggests a concept of the slow building up of a potential which at some point spills over into outwardness. If this concept is joined to that of pulsating life, we would say that the overflowing drains the vessel and then halts. When it fills again, it begins overflowing. The filling is continuous, the overflowing intermittent, like water from a self-siphoning tank. The continual refilling and the periodic overflowing are two aspects of the operation of life.

The best illustration of this process of filling and overflowing in our immediate experience is that of psychic projection.

> What do we do ourselves when psychic structures in our hearts come into such close relationship or conflict that they manifest an energy too great for us to bear? We project them

> 'outside' ourselves in images. When passion grows resistless in our hearts we body it forth in images of beautiful women that dance before our mental eye. So with hunger or the surging waves of anger; when they grow intense, images of tempting dishes or of hateful enemies lure the energy outside and draw us from ourselves….and…we rush forth to battle or to pleasure. Like Cuchulain, bewitched upon the Irish shore, we battle with the waves. The magic web we wove has wrapped us round, and we go forth, forgetting all, questing for Trojan Helen, seeking food, slaying our hateful foes.
>
> (Sri Krishna Prem and Sri Madhava Ashish, 1966, pp. 109-10)

The experience brought forth in an episode of experiencing is, as in this further metaphor, one of projected 'inner' content, that content being drawn forth from the accumulated wealth of the cosmic archives of *Rta*.

This symbolism of psychic projection draws attention to one further aspect of the Potential – that of the need for a channelled outflow. There must be a tank to fill. In theory, and in practice too, the Potential is unlimited. Its manifest correlate is the entire content of *Rta*, the accumulated seeds of innumerable past and future actual existents offers limitless possibilities for actualisation. But not all those possibilities can be actualised, for *Rta* imposes limitations as to what can actually occur based upon the configurations of events that have occurred in the past and will be actualised in the future. These limitations take the form of positively and negatively prehending individual seeds, and in the ways those seeds are utilised in developing the final prehension that is the satisfaction of any particular episode. Only because of these limitations is it possible to bring forth a definite experience. The flow of life must be channelled by the Potential itself, and the channelling is the result of limitations imposed by the past and the future on the present.

An explanation using traditional symbols will be helpful. The Nasidiya hymn of the Rigveda puts the matter this way:

> Darkeness was there, all wrapped around by darkness, and all was water indiscriminate. Then that which was hidden in the Void, that One, emerging, stirring, through the power of Ardor, came to be
>
> (Rigveda, X, 129, 3, Panikkar, 2001, p. 58)

The creation of a definite experience, we are told, is the result of ardour. My interpretation of this is:

> Panikkar here translates the Sanskrit word *tapas* as ardour. Literally, the word [*tapas*] means heat or concentration or focusing of inner energy. The sense of this verse seems to be that the unlimited, indefinable One delimits itself by an effort of will. An analogy is the intense focusing of one's mental energy that is needed to bring forth a clear-cut conception from the background of inarticulate thought and feeling. The conception can never do full justice to the rich potential of the inarticulate background, but the result is something definite as opposed to the indefiniteness of the background.
>
> (Jackson, 2008, p. 157)

Note

1. In this book the Potential is termed the 'One'. That Which Is is termed the 'Zero' or the 'No Number' (p. 57). This convention is not followed by everyone. In the quote from Plotinus at the head of this chapter the One stands for That Which Is. There is no explicit Potential in Plotinus' system, creation being simply an overflowing. Even here, however, a content of the overflow is implied. In the quote from the Rigveda the One is taken to be equivalent to the Potential.

10
Causation

One whole governs the moving and the stable, that which walks and flies, this variegated creation.

(Rigveda 3, 54, 8; Miller, 1985, p. 4)

The creation of actual existents is an orderly process, and there is also order in the inter-relations among existents. Moreover, the order thus exhibited in diverse elements of manifestation is singular; that is to say, none of the elements exhibits an order exclusive to itself, or exclusive to any group of elements, whether in the past, the present or the future. This overall system of causal relationships is not a static entity, but a living, ever-changing, evolving being. It is modified at every moment by the results of the working out in the fields of experiencing of the set of possibilities and limitations it defined the moment before. David Selby has visualised this integral causal agency as a dance – of the free-form variety (Selby, 2002).

There are two aspects of this entity termed the 'set of possibilities and limitations for the determination of future episodes of experiencing': static and dynamic. The static aspect consists of abstract, unvarying relationships that are best visualised as numbers, ratios of numbers and geometrical forms. Plato seems to have focused on this aspect exclusively when he propounded his concept of Ideas. Similarly, 17th century European scientists and philosophers also conceived of the laws of nature as immutable mathematical relationships that are impressed upon material bodies involved in particular phenomena to co-ordinate their movements in relation to one another.

The dynamic aspect incorporates the static elements in a living, self-perpetuating, ever-changing and evolving universal process. This universal

process has been termed *Rta* in Indian Vedic culture. Stressing its dynamic aspect, G. C. Pande has defined it thus:

> It would be natural to seek the content of *Rta* but the quest would be doomed to failure because *Rta* is…neither a single law or form nor any system of laws or forms. It is rather the ultimate pre-supposition of all specific types of order or systems of laws…, itself not a limited form but a whole that is self-determined and self-expressive in infinite variety.
>
> (Pande, 1990, p. 25)

A fuller and more beautiful description has been given by Goethe.

> Nature! We are surrounded by her, embraced by her – impossible to release ourselves from her and impossible to enter more deeply into her…. She creates ever new forms; what exists has never existed before; what has existed returns not again, everything is new and yet always old. We live in her midst and yet we are strangers to her. She speaks constantly with us but betrays not her secret to us. We are continually at work upon her, yet have no power over her…. She is forever building, forever demolishing, and her workshop is not to be found…. She is the sole artist….
>
> (Stone, 1971, p. 52)

The word 'nature' may be taken as a synonym for the dynamic aspect of what is being termed in this book the 'cosmic causal agency', or *'Rta'*. She does indeed talk to us, both overtly in the phenomena of everyday experience, and covertly in the insights by which she reveals aspects of her inner workings. But to know her in her totality is impossible.

Immanence

> By the doctrine of Law as immanent it is meant that the order of nature expresses the characters of the…things which jointly compose the existences to be found in nature. When

> we understand the essences of these things, we thereby know their mutual relations to each other.
>
> (Whitehead, 1933, p.116)

The whole determines each part, and each part in turn determines the whole and, hence, each of the other parts.

In the creation of a new experience, no definite single cause can be found. It becomes what it must become, and what it must become is determined by the totality of what has become and what will become. But the totality is itself determined by what each of the new experiences becomes and by the joint effect of what all new existents become. This being so, the nature of any one experience reveals, as Whitehead says, the nature of its relationships with all other individual existents and the nature of it place in the togetherness of all actual existents. Further, the order of existents in the togetherness of all existents is what the existent is, though from a particular point of view. Dynamically, what has happened in the creation of each new existent feeds back, as it were, into the togetherness of all existent units (seeds). The internal order of the togetherness is thus constantly being revised or updated; every moment it is different, thus giving rise to novel new existents in every generation.

Rta will appear to be operating at both ends of the process of an episode of experiencing. The decision to accept or reject each of the karmic seeds by a new episode in the process of becoming is mirrored in each of these seeds by a decision, on its part, to accept or reject the prehending episode. It is a recognition on the part of both parties in the transaction that this particular seed has a role to play in the episode becoming what it must become. At the other end of the process, the satisfaction, there is, so to speak, a 'reaching back' to the beginning of the process to determine the choices of the prehensions to be made, and also to determine the ways in which the prehended data are integrated preparatory to the final satisfaction. However, these are not separate causes, but merely how the one cause (*Rta)* appears to manifest when viewed from different perspectives.

Whitehead, as we have seen, follows Plato in assuming the ingression of abstract organising principles, the 'Ideas', or as he terms them, 'eternal objects', into the flow of becoming. These, he says, are selectively prehended by an episode of experiencing separately from the prehension of karmic seeds of experiences in the past. The fact that the Ideas are prehended suggests that the prehending episode has the knowledge and the ability to choose, which in turn implies the concept of law as immanent. And yet the Ideas are external to the prehending entity, thus suggesting the concept of law as imposed. He thus seems to waver between the two concepts. Further, he is not clear about the reason for the selection of some eternal objects and the rejection of others; that is, what the nature of the selection agency is and where it resides.

Novelty

One further aspect of Whitehead's concept of causation needs to be mentioned because it also reveals a less than adequate understanding of the requirements of a concept of causation in the scheme of ideas he has formulated. He writes: '…the exact conformation of nature to any law is not to be expected (Whitehead, 1933, p. 116).' Why this should be so he does not say, but to insist on it seems to be necessary for the development of his concept of novelty. He sees all unexpected deviations from the law of his conception as instances of novelty. An unexpected outcome of an episode of experiencing is, however, only unexpected from the standpoint of an observer who experiences only a small fragment of the entire cosmic process. *Rta* is too vast and detailed to be encompassed in a single experience. For an observer of the togetherness of all actual existents there could be no novelty.

A corollary of this concept of novelty is that of chance. In mainstream contemporary global culture, as in Whitehead's cosmology, some causal relationships are obvious to the systematic observer of his or her experience, and have been formally described in discursive or mathematical language. For many effects, however, causes are not ordinarily evident, and are thus classed as unknown. Chance is the operation of 'unknown'

causes, though the word also carries the connotation that the 'effects' are causeless. This appears to be the rationale for saying that the 'results' are not lawful – that is, that they lie outside the domain of cause and effect. Such unlawful 'results' are the source of all novel (that is, unexpected) change. Evolution, in the sense of the appearance of ever more complex communities, is thus made possible by chance events.

The concepts of novelty and chance permeate every corner of modern thought, and apparently Whitehead was unable to free himself from them. When unexpectedness was found inescapable in the physical sciences at the beginning of the 20th century, materialist-, mechanistic-minded scientists could only deal with it by waffling; that is, by saying that laws of nature are not definite, but only probable, and can be dealt with statistically. Even the scientists exploring biological systems, when confronted with unexpected process outcomes, are at a loss. They 'explain' these outcomes as 'emergent properties' of the system, a manoeuvre that simply names the phenomenon but does not explain it.

Charles Darwin was candid in this matter. He said: 'I am inclined to look at everything as resulting from designed laws, with the details, whether good or bad, left to the working out of what we may call chance (Stone, 1980, p.642).' The preservation of, or in other words, the propagation through succeeding generations of, chance variations in the features of organisms is his explanation for the creation of new species. The concept of genetic inheritance of chance variations (neo-Darwinism) is today under heavy attack, but the underlying concept of chance is never questioned.

Where the totality of experiences is ordered by *Rta* there is no such thing as chance. Every event has a cause. In the complex dynamic system that is Rta the possibilities for apparently 'novel', but in fact, entirely predictable, occurrences are virtually infinite. We may be surprised by the turn of events, but we need not doubt that it resulted from the working out of the consequences of antecedent events. All ancient cultures featured this concept. *Rta* in Vedic culture and Fate in Homeric Greek culture are examples. This concept can be used to interpret a modern event such as the sinking of the Titanic. It was not just by chance that an iceberg drifted

into the path of the ship on a dark night. The sinking can be seen as the inevitable result of, and the punishment for, a collective act of hubris. (In the film *Titanic* people idly remark that 'even God could not sink this ship.') Acceptance of Fate leads to a healthy humility; the thought of a universe ruled by chance leads to foolishness, and – ultimately – to despair.

Fate is illustrated in numerous novels. One of my favourites is Quaratulain Hyder's *The River of Fire* in which a karmic seed produced a hundred human generations ago gives rise to a series of tragedies continuing to the present. A recent novel, Ken Follet's *A Dangerous Fortune*, traces the consequences of a schoolboy's theft of money through the following years. On the day following the theft a group of schoolboys, including the thief, Micky, and Peter who had seen him stealing the money, and Hugh, went swimming in an old quarry. Micky killed Peter by drowning him in order to silence him, but made it look like an accident. Hugh did not know the truth, but only found out years later. At the end of the novel he mused about the fate of the boys who went swimming that day.

> He was the only one left, except for Albert Cammel out in the Cape Colony. The others were all dead: Peter Middleton killed that day; Tonio shot by Micky two Christmases ago; Micky himself drowned in a steamer trunk; and now Edward, dead of syphilis and buried in a cemetery in France. It was almost as if something evil had come up out of the deep water that day in 1866 and entered their lives, bringing all the dark passions that had blighted their lives, hatred, greed, selfishness and cruelty; fomenting deceit, bankruptcy, disease and murder. But it was over now. The debts were paid.
>
> (Follet, 1993, pp. 567-8)

Such after-the-event reconstructions as these are, of course, gross simplifications. They are no more than a picking out of prominent threads running through the totality of experiencing. They catch our eye, so to speak, and give us a sense that there is a reason for whatever particular experience comes along. Occasionally, however, where a thread seems

particularly strong, it may seem, in a flash of insight, as leading up to one's own suffering, and a decision may be taken to undertake an action or actions that will attenuate its strength to cause further occasions of suffering in the future. Initiating such a counter-current intentionally is an example of how *Rta* seeks to neutralise, or damp down, the effects of a disharmonious event. In Vedic society this was understood and the need for voluntary effort to maintain harmony was met by ritual sacrifices (Miller, 1985, pp. 40-1). A recent teacher, G. I. Gurdjieff, termed this 'voluntary suffering' (Shirely, 2004, p. 124), the suffering is undergone voluntarily out of a conviction, born of insight, that accepting one's suffering as necessary because it is lawful and unavoidable, even though one does not know the specific cause. In so doing the strength of the 'original' cause is attenuated, perhaps even eliminated as a possibility for the future. Reacting mechanically, unthinkingly to one's suffering ensures that the original cause will be propagated further with no loss of potency.

In a contemporary context of the 'consumer society', the idea of sacrifice manifests in the concept of the need for the practice of voluntary restraint in consumption. But it lacks a believable rationale and so is practised half-heartedly at best. The practice of voluntary restraint requires the primary concept of law as immanent in the background to be pursued with conviction and consistency. No doubt the concept of sustainability is now familiar, but it lacks an effective rationale. It is a secondary concept and depends for its legitimacy on primary concept of law as immanent which is clearly at odds with the concepts of law as imposed and of material existents that feature in the worldview of contemporary global culture. For this reason the notion of sustainability remains ineffective in practice.

It is worth noting that Darwin, in continuation of the comment quoted a moment ago, does, in fact question the concept of chance, even if ineffectively. He said: 'Not that this notion [of chance] *at all* satisfies me. I feel most deeply that the whole subject is too profound for the human intellect (Stone, 1982, p. 642, italics in the original).' In one sense Darwin is right: the full details of *Rta* are beyond the reach of an observer confined to a single experience. There is order, but it is far too extensive and subtle

to be captured in a determinant way in an experience brought forth in a human episode of experiencing.

It is also noteworthy that Albert Einstein was also uncomfortable with the notion of chance. He refused to accept indeterminacy as anything more that the difficulty in grasping the totality of causal relationships operating in manifest existence. He maintained that: '…the theories which invoked indeterminacy were forced to do so only because of man's ignorance' (Clark, 1984, pp. 423-4).' But, unlike Darwin, he felt that a comprehensive theory of determinant causality is possible. He spent the last three decades of his life attempting to formulate such a determinant theory that would bring together all physical phenomena, but was unable to do so.[1]

In this matter Darwin was surely right and Einstein wrong. Darwin thought that there is a cosmic causal agency that governs the entirety of events. And he had the wisdom to see that to formulate such a concept in any comprehensive, determinant way is impossible. And so he gave it no more thought.

Still, the ultimate presupposition about the nature of causation that operates in the background, beyond the reach of discursive thought, is important. Had the concept of *Rta* been a part of Darwin's intellectual heritage, he might have refrained from formulating his narrowly deterministic, mechanistic theory of pangenesis (see page 105 for a definition), which, in its further development after his time, has become the bane of contemporary biological, medical and social sciences.

A cosmic archives

A function of *Rta* not so far mentioned is that of an archives. That it is a vast store of completed episodes of experiencing, or karmic seeds, is evident. The seeds, however, are not stored just anyhow; *Rta* is not a junk room. Each past episode is classified and then systematically stored away in the appropriate shelf or bin. The classification has two dimensions,

temporal and according to the type of the experience and the dominant primordial theme that it embodies. With the help of a master catalogue, any past episode whatsoever can be retrieved when needed.

This metaphor is intended as a general introduction. However, it must not be pressed too far. There is no archivist who classifies, stores away and then retrieves the seeds. All this is done automatically by the seeds themselves, both individually and collectively. The archives and the archivist are present in every seed and in the collectivity of all seeds, and nowhere else. The point has already been made that *Rta* is immanent in every existent and not imposed on it from the 'outside'. There is no outside and hence no outside causal agency.

Though past episodes are classified and stored away on a temporal basis, that is, chronologically, they nevertheless often exhibit a surprising freshness and potency when subsequently prehended and enter into the constitution of fresh episodes, nor does the ease with which they are accessed diminish with time. There is thus no difference in freshness, potency and accessibility of a karmic seed formed a billion billion generations of experiences ago and one in the most recent generation of experiences. This is true for the seeds of dream and waking experiences both.

In dreams, for example, memories of traumatic emotional experiences of childhood often surface in adult life, though usually disguised somewhat; their impact when they surface is as great as that of the original experience. Also, such childhood experiences, recalled in present waking experience, sometimes result in crippling compulsions; crippling because their origin in the past is not recognised. In contemporary psycho-analytical terms, the memory of the original traumatic experience is 'repressed'.

Whitehead, in writing about science has, in his own fashion, referred to this same concept in the context of waking experience.

> The collapse of nineteenth-century dogmatism is a warning that the special sciences require that the imaginations of men be stored with imaginative possibilities as yet unutilized

> in the service of scientific explanation. The nearest analogy is to be seen in the history of some species of animal, plant or microbe, which lurks for ages as an obscure by-product of nature in some lonely jungle, or morass, or island. Then by some trick of circumstance it escapes into the outer world and transforms a civilisation, or destroys an empire or the forests of a continent. Such is the potential power of the ideas which live in the various systems of philosophy.
>
> (Whitehead, 1933, pp. 149-50)

This could be taken as an metaphor for the retrieval of an ancient seed of the thought type that appears radically to alter the placid flow of a temporal community, changing its course. Incidentally, we again notice in this quote Whitehead's commitment to the concept of chance ('some trick of circumstance').

In the metaphor of an archives, with its storage bins, a sense of space is evoked. *Rta* is, however, spaceless, even though it informs experiences that do manifest a spatial dimension. This is an instance of a physical thing used to symbolise a thought thing.

Past episodes of experiencing, or karmic seeds, are classified on the basis of type and category. The former term refers to the classification of experiences into four types: physical, mental, emotional and feeling. It is helpful in understanding the functioning of *Rta*, no less than in managing our lives, to consider that seeds of these different types are stored in separate bins (that is, shelves, compartments and sections) in the archives. We routinely think of these four types of experiences as groups that constitute different realms. In other words, each type has a collective identity. In traditional societies the universe is seen as having different realms, each presided over by a deity with whom we must communicate and effectively interact to ensure the equitable flow of our lives. In contemporary educational practice we speak in terms such as 'all-round development' of the child – that is, simultaneous physical, emotional and

mental development, and we seem to imply that these functions are the work of specific areas or organs of the body.

The concept of an archives with its images of sections and bins and of filing past episodes away must ultimately be transcended for another reason also. To follow it further would require us to visualise an index for the easy retrieval of filed episodes. But the stored episodes are nowhere; as was said above, *Rta* has no spatial dimension. If we must persist with this metaphor, we are forced to say that the 'index' is present in every past experience itself – and nowhere else, just as the entire archives is present within every experience. And even this is misleading, for an experience has no inside or outside.

In the previous section it was said that *Rta* is reconfigured or updated with every episode of experiencing. This updating occurs simultaneously in every individual past experience. The metaphor of a seed is particularly useful here as it reminds us that past experiences are living entities, just as *Rta* itself is a living being, living through every episode, past present and future, the 'One' of the verse at the head of this chapter.

Experiences, in their seed form, are also classified according to the dominant theme they embody. These themes are of two types: primordial themes and process-created themes. Numbers, ratios of numbers and geometrical shapes are examples of primordial themes. Twoness, threeness, fourness, sixness and sevenness, in particular, are manifest in a large variety of experiences. Examples of the first two of these have already been mentioned. Fourness appeared a few paragraphs ago as the four types of experiences. It also figures in C.G. Jung's four 'functions of consciousness' (sensation, intuition, feeling and thinking), in the four dimensions of space-time, and as the sacred quaternary which is the basis for so much religious symbolism (the Tetraktys of the Pythagoreans, the four-faced Brahma of the Hindus, the four-square heavenly Jerusalem of the Christians, the four-lettered Tetagrammation of the Kabbalists [Sri Krishna Prem and Sri Madhava Ashish, 1966, p. 168]). Among simple ratios are the golden rectangle and the notes of the musical scale. Among

the geometrical shapes are the triangle and the circle which are, of course, analogues of the numbers three and one. Colours are another example of primordial themes.

Process-created themes are a part of the totality of the process of the creation of all experiences. They incorporate, or are built up around, primordial themes. They first appear as a particular configuration of features in a specific experience, that is necessary to correct an imbalance or to resolve a crisis in the functioning of *Rta*, which is blocking its further evolution. It sets in motion a corrective or resolving trend of successive episodes which preferentially prehend this pioneering episode because of its appropriateness in meeting a current need of *Rta*. Or, and this amounts to saying the same thing from the perspective of the other end of the prehensive transaction, the pioneering experience and its direct descendents become more insistent, they, as it were, 'push themselves forward'. Its increasing insistence with every succeeding generation of experiences results from the fact that they are placed in the same storage bin. By virtue of their being stored together they gain a collective identity, a process-created theme, and thereby acquire power.

Examples of process-created themes are physical forms, animal and plant instincts, social relationships and the mythical figures that appear in dream and vision.

The power or 'pushiness' of an episode in a prehensive transaction is due to its primordial theme. The several seeds that share a primordial theme do not individually 'push' themselves forward, but rather the theme they embody that does the pushing. It is this element that will, at the concrescence stage, form the basis for the grouping of prehended episodes into a spatial community in which each member embodies this theme. In the concrescence the incidental features of each episode, the way the primordial theme is 'dressed up', are at the same time pushed into the background, or ignored. Jung's anima archetype that appears in dreams can serve as an example here. It appears variously to different men, but

basically it is the shadowy, mysterious, and hugely attractive (or repulsive) woman that comes across and is recalled on waking.

Note

1. Einstein, like Plato before him, marvelled at the mathematical regularities revealed in phenomena. And, like Plato he interpreted these mathematical regularities literally, or so it seems to me. This literal interpretation was responsible for his conviction that it is, in principle, possible to describe the totality of causal relationships among physical entities mathematically in one set of determinant algebraic equations.

11
Time and Space

It is impossible to say what time and space are in themselves. In the absence of physical things we could have no conception of space. In the absence of series of similar physical (and other types of) things appearing one after another we could have no conception of time. On the other hand, we could have no conception of physical things in the absence of space, nor could we have any conception of a number of similar physical or other types of things as a series in the absence of time. This is an example of what is meant when it was said (p.19) that to be coherent a set of definitions of the seven formative elements of experiencing must 'presuppose each other so that in isolation none of them has any meaning.'

Symbolic descriptions, however, can be helpful. Here is a beautiful one from the Rigveda.

> At first was neither Being nor Non-being
> There was not air nor yet sky beyond.
> What was the wrapping? Where? In whose protection?
> Was water there, unfathomable and deep?
>
> There was no death then, nor yet deathlessness;
> Of night and day there was not any sign.
> The one breathed without breath, by its own impulse.
> Other than that was nothing else at all.

(Rigveda 10, 129,1-2: Panikkar, 2001, p.58)

Interpreting (or translating) these verses, we can say that reference is being made to the Potential. The Potential has beingness but this is not apparent in its latent phase; beingness only becomes apparent in its active phase as the I of 'I am'. The Potential is not That Which Is, which

has no being. The spatial imagery 'beyond', 'wrapping', 'in whose protection' and 'waters unfathomable' are attempts at describing the nature of space, which is conceivable only in the active phase of the Potential, but exists in principle in it latent phase. Similarly, the temporal imagery 'day and night' and 'breathing' suggest that time exists in principle in the latent phase of the Potential.

The ordering of things

The parts of physical things are 'spread out' or disposed 'here' and 'there' in relation to each other. Space, then, is a system of relationships among parts of things. These relationships are described in terms of distances and direction between the parts. We might also say that empty space is where there are no things, or, what is between and around things, marking them out as distinct entities and making possible the concept that there are multiple existent physical entities, and not just one.

In mental experiences where a concept is represented by an image of a physical thing, that thing similarly exhibits extensive relationships among its parts. Thus a mandala or a pyramid, for example, or an archive or a forest, when it symbolises a concept, is spatially articulated. Emotions and feelings are singular and without parts. They do not, therefore, have extensive relationships within themselves. Nevertheless, they are usually referred to a body which does have spatial dimensions. Thus, the shock of bereavement or the joy and relief on finding a lost child are felt in the region of the solar plexus. The burnt finger is my burnt finger.

Outside an experience space does not operate. We do, of course, use physical metaphors in speaking of such entities as the archives of *Rta* (it has sections, bins and so forth).

The metric of space is the difference in the distance between two selected parts of a physical thing that are in relative motion to each other in two successive experiences of a temporal community. In practice, this distance may be too small to constitute a separate experience, but multiples of that basic unit occurring over several successive experiences will be sufficient

to do so. Thus, for example, the movement of the sun in relation to the position from which I observe it in two successive experiences is too small to register (feature in a separate experience). The movement over a complete cycle of day and night, however, does easily register. If the two experiences – the beginning and ending of a cycle – refer to a person on a globular earth, rotating in relation to a stationery sun, and by means of several calculations, the basic metric of distance becomes the circumference of the globe earth. This, when divided into a number of equal units, becomes the practical metric for use in all situations.

The ordering of events

An event is the single occurrence of a complete process. In this book an event is, in the first instance, an episode of experiencing. A process implies an orderly sequence of steps, each of which may itself be considered a discrete event. In an episode of experiencing there are three steps or stages. These steps also occur in a causal sequence. Causation is thus pre-supposed in the concept of time, and vice versa.

A sense of time in an experience results from the appearance of what has been termed a temporal community, either already-formed as a karmic seed in the past or a freshly created one in the experience itself. While the experience is seemingly of only one thing, there is the accompanying sense that that thing appeared in experiences 'prior' to the present one. The thing is experienced as having a past, and thus appears to be a relatively enduring entity. At the same time, there arises the anticipation that it will appear in subsequent experiences, that is, that its endurance will continue into the future.

Time is presupposed in the symbolic, rhythmic or pulsating model of creation adopted in this system. That rhythm or pulsation is the alternate appearance and disappearance of experiences in awareness. In terms of the symbolism used earlier, time is the succession of discrete journeys of the Dweller at the Source into outwardness. Each journey is an event. When He returns from each journey, a new seed is added to the archive of

Rta, and with its addition, *Rta* is reconfigured to incorporate it integrally. Time marks out the succession of these journeys, or, conversely, the causal sequence of these journeys defines time. It is important to recall, in contemplating these images, that the time referred to is potential and not actual time.

The activities of Rta are structured by the logical relationships among karmic seeds, or what may be termed 'logical continuity', for time does not manifest except in sequences of the appearances and disappearances of experiences.

The sense of time is heightened when, in successive experiences in a temporal community, the relative positions of various parts of the thing experienced change. In other words, the parts seen to 'move', as in, for example, the temporal community of a shooting star in the night sky. The shooting star is a part of a view that includes several actual stars. Its position changes in relation to those stars; a split second ago it was there, and now is it there. The shooting star is perceived as transiting a series of 'positions' smoothly with no apparent discontinuities or jumps. Of course, there are jumps, for the 'motion' is really composed of separate experiences strung together.[1]

If a given part of a thing moves in a regular, repetitive manner its relative motion forms the basis for portioning what is otherwise only a vague sense of the passage of time. In other words, a repetitive movement, such as that of the sun in relation to the horizons, becomes a basic metric.

The concept of 'the past' refers to the status of an experience that was once in the now, but no longer is. The concept 'the future' refers to the status of an experience that is not in the now, but will be later. The status or state of these past and future experiences is that of entries filed in the archives of *Rta*.

The future

So far we have been concerned with how the past enters into the future. At the same time it was said that a new experience becomes what it must

become. This implied that the future determines the present no less than the past. To be more precise, the seeds of future experiences are also prehended in an episode of experiencing. Here, we come up against yet another paradox. We are accustomed to think that time flows from the past through the present to the future, and yet a present episode of experiencing can and does, as it were, reach forward in time to prehend the seed of a future experience. This is the meaning of what was said earlier that an experience becomes what it must become. The future is the cause of the present as much as the past is. The future guides every stage of the current process of an episode of experiencing – primary prehensions, concrescence, and the final prehension (satisfaction). The totality of the past and of the future constitutes the bundle of possibilities for the determination of an experience, and places limitations on just which of these possibilities will find final expression and how. these possibilities and limitations are effectuated by *Rta*.

The future enters into a current episode of experiencing in two ways, general and specific. The general way is the feeling that: 1) there will be episodes of experiencing after this one; and 2) the various elements of the present experience will, to a great extent, reappear in future experiences, or, in other words, there will be continuity. This expectation is based on the feeling that all these various elements have occurred in the past. Collectively, they find expression in the felt need in the present experience to make plans for the future.

Aside from this mechanism whereby the future partly determines the present, future episodes themselves are sometimes prehended in the present episode. The future is thus 'previewed'. Such previews are sometimes vague, but sometimes occur in considerable detail. Instances of this are premonitions which occur in the waking state. These generate the feeling that something definite will happen, but usually do not indicate exactly what. For example, people get the strong feeling, unaccompanied by any definite reason, that they should cancel their booking for a seat on a plane flight. They do it, and later learn that the plane crashed, killing everyone on board. Here the future entered into the present in a very specific way.

Pre-cognitive dreams and visions are more vivid and detailed previews of the future than premonitions are. However, these are seen for what they are only later, sometimes years later. They are usually seen as purposeful, when the previewed events actually happen, and often as decisive turning points in the person's life. Well-known examples are the sinking of the Titanic, seen by some people in advance, and Abraham Lincoln's dream of seeing his dead body lying in state.

Premonitions and pre-cognitive dreams and visions are often seen in retrospect as having ensured the health, or even the continuation, of a community. Whatever the specific result, the trajectory of the particular temporal community is altered. The cause of such alterations must be considered to be the need of *Rta* for crucial change in its configuration in order to maintain a tolerable balance.

The present

An episode of experiencing has been said to be as brief as a wink. It is not, however, temporally dimensionless since it is possible to conceive of it as occurring in stages. There is also a feeling of duration. We cannot hold that feeling, though, for even as we try to hold it, it slips away into the past, and is replaced by the feeling of a fresh duration. This feeling of a definite, if elusive, duration is termed the 'now'. As a mere feeling of duration divested of the content of the specific experience that accompanies it, all 'nows' are identical.

Note

1. At very high velocities, such as those at which sub-atomic particles move, these jumps are, however, perceptible because the distance travelled in a unit of time (the interval between two successive experiences) is much greater. This perception seems to be what physicists are referring to when they speak of 'quantum jumps'.

12
The Subject

> …Western peoples exhibit…two attitudes [that] are really inconsistent… A scientific realism, based upon mechanism, is conjoined with an unwavering belief in the world of men and higher animals as being composed of self-determining organisms. This radical inconsistency at the base of modern thought accounts for much that is half-hearted and wavering in our civilisation.
>
> (Whitehead, 1925, p. 76)

The category 'the subject' requires a definition, in the context of a specific experience, of who or what the experiencer is. That experiencer, the I of an experience, however, defies all definitions, for the simple reason that the subject can never be an object with qualities that can be described. This is a corollary of the statement that the object, or what appears in an experience, can never become a subject which knows itself.

In an experience the subject, the I, always refers to itself with reference to the content of that experience. For example; 'I am looking at this person'; 'she is facing me'; 'I see her clearly by the light of the moon'; the air is heavy with the scent of *Raat ki Rani* (Queen of the Night)'; she is speaking to me'; 'I reply'; 'now I am holding her hand'; 'I love her'. Nothing whatever can be said about what the subject of all these experiences is in itself. It is not a perceivable or conceivable entity. It is, however, somehow linked to the content of an experience. That link is termed a 'person'.

In human episodes of experiencing a recurring, persistent, identification of the subject is with a particular body of the species *Homo sapiens*. This body is a physical thing which appears explicitly or implicitly in every

experience of the temporal community that constitutes the life of that thing. The person is that body for all practical purposes. This is not to say that that the entire body becomes a thing in an experience in that community; it does not, even though parts of it sometimes do. The hand that is writing this is 'my' hand, the eyes that that see 'my' hand writing are 'my' eyes. Implied in these statements is the further statement: these eyes and this hand are parts of 'my' body. However, since the subject is identified with this body, it can never experience it as a thing as it is experienced in experiences where the I does not identify with any object.

Projection and identification

The creative outflow that brings forth an experience may be analysed into two movements. The first is the projection into outwardness of the objective situation that is to be. The determinants are present as karmic seeds in the archives of *Rta*. This projection fulfils the desire of the 'I am' for experience.

The second movement is of identification. The 'I am' desires to experience not just an objective situation, but also to be part of that situation – to acquire identity in relationship to the various aspects (parts) of the situation (thing) which is experienced. With the satisfaction of this desire to be one among many, the process of creation is complete.

The first movement, the projection phase of an episode of experiencing, has been described in the previous six chapters. In this chapter we will look at the second or identification phase.

Forgetting

That a person appears at all is due to a forgetting. The 'I am' forgets that it existed before the appearance of the experience, and, indeed, that the experience has come into existence because of its desire for it. Such 'forgetting' is its decision to allow itself to be swept along in the out-flowing tide. Without its consent there would be no outflowing tide, no experience. It allows itself to be used, as it were, to make the process of

manifestation possible. It gives up its freedom for the imaginary security in an experience. And yet, it knows that it is not really the person, and there is a vague inner longing for its lost freedom.

Meanwhile,the the 'I am' carries on as if it is the person it imagines itself to be. It seems to enjoy the pleasures of mind, body and emotions, suffers pain, sorrow and bereavement, and in general takes to itself everything that happens in the experiences in which it participates.

Western philosophical and religious thought has generally acquiesced in this concept that the person is what it imagines itself to be. It follows that awareness is then thought to be an emergent property of this person, and that thinking, feeling, emotion and doing are the ways in which it functions. The nagging feeling that perhaps these are not valid concepts is appeased for some by the concept of a soul. But the soul, as it turns out, is finally also a derivative of this ephemeral entity, all talk of its being immortal notwithstanding (see Box 12.1, *The concept of the soul)*. Many people today have dropped the concept of the soul with its religious associations. The resultant vague, persistent feeling of not really being *a* participant in experiences finds expression in the concept that, though I am a person, yet somehow I can act in causal independence of the phenomena with which I identify myself. Current economic, ecological and social crises all point to the profound error of this concept.

However we define the person, as long as that definition depends upon things and events in a world it is a cause of sorrow because all such things and events come to an end. With their ending our self-definition collapses. Popular wisdom has it that time heals the sorrow of loss. This means only that gradually another self-definition arises based on other things and events. The only way to overcome sorrow is to resist this unrealistic definition of the person – by remembering one's real identity.

The detached participant

The alternative definition of the subject of an experience, the one adopted in the worldview being sketched in this book, is that of the detached participant. This is a subject that does not define itself in terms of an

Box 12.1 The concept of the soul

The basis for the concept of the soul is undoubtedly the vague feeling many people have that 'I am not really the person I habitually think I am.' This feeling is a definite bodily sensation, located in the region of the solar plexus. That which I really am is felt to be other than the body, though located within it. The usual conclusion is that this feeling points to a non-material entity within the material body. Being immaterial it does not disappear with the death of the body, but continues to exist in a disembodied state.

The incoherence of, and logical contradictions in, this formulation of the concept of the soul are obvious. It is incoherent because in a materialist worldview everything must be material, and an immaterial soul thus has no *locus standi*. Its introduction is arbitrary. The concept is illogical because the soul is thought to have a beginning in time, but no ending. A beginning is necessary to this way of thinking because the soul obtains its individuality from the body. But if it does not exist before the coming into existence of the body, it cannot be said to be eternal. This logically flawed concept is a fundamental tenet of the Platonic worldview: 'Socrates' soul is identical with Socrates himself; the survival of his soul is the survival of Socrates – in a purified state (Encylopaedia Britannica, 1992, article on Platonism).'

experience – because it knows, or remembers, that it exists prior to, and even in the absence of all experience. It knows itself as the Dweller at the Source. And the Dweller at the Source is not different from the Source in which He 'dwells'. The true subject, or witness, is therefore only 'That Which Is'.

In its manifest embodiments 'That Which Is' distributively lodges itself for the time being in one or another of the temporal communities which appear in experiences. When so lodged it does not forget its true identity. It then acts, or participates in its immediate context in the ways which that context requires, and in this acting it is joyful.

There is no doer

An important implication of this concept of the detached participant is that there is no doer, but only doing. I do not act or think, there is only acting and thinking. Particular acts and thoughts occur because the particular experience in which they occur is the way it is, and this in turn is the way it is because the totality of all experiences, is the way it is. This does not mean that the 'person' need not take any decisions, but that his or her decisions are what they must be. There can be no decider; there is only deciding. There is no free will, in the sense of a person deciding the course of events in a series of experiences, for every act of will is only what is necessary to actualise what has already been determined. Some acts bring pleasure, some pain, but for the detached participant all alike are suffused with joy – because he or she has decided to accept the fact that he or she does not decide.

On the one hand it has been said that the person does not decide, that there is only deciding, and, on the other hand, it is being said that he or she can decide to accept that there is no one who decides. This at least is the experience of countless people who have found themselves inexplicably awakened to a desire to remember, to the certain knowledge that it is possible for them to become detached participants, and that some people have in fact become detached participants. This mass of empirical evidence from all times and traditions, is sufficient warning that we are dealing here with a trans-logical aspect of reality. A person decides to accept as a fact that he or she can become a detached participant. Such a decision is necessary for realising that fact. But such a decision is only an appearance. What decides is not the person, the forgetful subject, but 'That Which Is', as it intrudes into experience as a subtle current that carries the person into remembering. But, the person must acquiesce in that movement. By himself or herself the person cannot decide to acquiesce, but only wish to do so. That wish or longing exposes him or her to the current. The wish, however, is also due only to the action of that current itself. The forgetful subject must only come to think for the moment that he or she wishes for freedom. Then it is possible.

13
Knowing

The process of knowing is the same as the process of experiencing. Everything brought forth in an episode of experiencing is known. Nothing that is not thus brought forth can be known. There is no saying 'I did not know that there was a man behind the tree because I could not see him.' In that experience there was no man behind the tree, full stop. The thought that there had been a man behind the tree in that experience is the result of experiences which appear later in which a man steps out from behind a tree.

Similarly, there is no saying 'There was an intricate design on the wall but it did not register because my attention was directed toward the woman at the other side of the room'. In that experience there was no design on the wall, but only a woman at the other side of the room. The intricate design was a thing in a later experience, and the thought 'there was an intricate design on the wall which did not 'register in my mind' is a thought thing of a still later experience to which the earlier experiences have contributed walls, a vague shape, and an intricate design.

Again, one cannot say 'I know that there is a child in that room, even though I cannot see inside the room (the door is closed), because I saw the child enter the room and I know that there is no window or second door through which he could have left the room. In the current experience there is no child in the room. In a series of previous experiences, now prehended, a child entered the room, and in another series, previous to that, and prehended now, I looked into the room and saw that there were no windows and only one door. These previous two series of experiences now generate the thought thing 'I know there is a child in that room, even though I don't see him.'

In this definition of knowing it is to be noted that in an experience brought forth in an episode of experiencing there is no seeing, but only an experience of seeing. There are no things out there in the world that are seen, nor are there images of things projected on a screen which I look at.

The subject who compulsively identifies with an experience cannot truly know that experience. That subject is the forgetful I, a person. His or her knowing cannot lead to true understanding of manifest existence because his or her knowledge lacks a context. Only the detached participant in an experience truly knows, that is understands. In true knowing there is joy. In the knowing of the forgetful I there is, sooner or later, only confusion, disappointment and sorrow.

An analysis of the process of knowing

The basis for an act of knowing is the transmission of influence. In the materialist worldview of contemporary global culture this transmission is defined as perception. In the alternative worldview of this book it is termed prehension. Diverse actual facts from the past in the form of actual existents in their seed form are prehended by an active process of becoming in the present and so enter into the constitution of a new actual fact, a new experience. A prehension feels like the receipt of a vague yet powerful influence from the past. Whitehead likens it to a vector, a mathematical expression denoting a quantity having direction as well as magnitude.

> Prehensions are the vehicles by which one actual entity becomes objectified in another…: they are 'vectors' for they feel what is *there* and transform it into what is *here*.… [They are an] inheritance of feeling from past data, and the feelings…[they transmit] are vague, massive, inarticulate, and felt as the efficaciousness of the past.
>
> (Sherburne, quoting in part from Whitehead himself, 1981, p. 235 [first half of quote] and p. 209 [second half of quote])

While prehensions are the basis, or the starting point, for an act of knowing, they are not sufficient in themselves for a complete knowledge

of an experience. Before a finished experience can be brought forth and known, its various prehensions must be made into an object or thing. And the thing must be placed in a temporal context. In the case of physical things, each part of the thing must also be arranged in a system of extended relationships. There are thus two stages in an act of knowing: the initial prehension of data, and the objectification of the final features of the thing that emerges from the final concrescence of those prehended data. As a result of the latter the various features of the thing 'stand forth', and as a result of the former the thing is felt to be a continuation from previous experiences.

Inference and testimony

The man behind the tree and the child in the room are not facts of experience, but are inferred from such facts. Inferences are, however, a type of knowledge, though less certain than the facts of experience from which they are derived. They are useful all the same.

Certain types of events are known to recur and with regularity. For example, if the experience of seeing a man disappear behind a tree is repeatedly followed a moment later by the experience of seeing a similar man emerging from behind a similar tree, I can expect that this time too a man will emerge from behind a similar tree after a man has disappeared behind a tree. If the second experience does not occur, I say that 'the' man has remained behind 'the' tree. On the basis of this inference I may, in later experiences go to and look behind 'the' tree. If I find a dying man there I might help to save him. Or, if I suspect a man is lying in wait behind the tree with the intention of harming me, I might decide to retreat rapidly and quietly, and so, if my inference is correct, save myself.

The testimony of other people may similarly be useful, even though it may be less than certain knowledge. If, in a particular experience, I infer that a man is behind a tree, and, in a following experience, see another man on the other side of a tree, a little way off from the tree and in my line of sight. That man signals to me that there is a man immediately behind

the tree, and I may take appropriate action. It is not certain even then, however, that there is a man behind the tree.

Memory

It will be evident that in the worldview here being developed there is no place for memory as a separate category of knowing. All prehensions are memories. By the term 'memory' the recall of previous experiences is meant. Equally, one might say that all knowing is based on memory. The mechanism of such 'memory recall' has been described in Chapter 6.

The flow of 'memories' is automatic and unending. It occurs, for the most part, with no awareness of trying to remember some particular experience or other. Where there is an experience of 'trying to remember' a particular experience, followed by its appearance as a subsequent experience, it by no means follows that the latter is caused by the former. Rather, both are caused by the necessities of *Rta* in those contexts. There is no one who remembers, but only remembering.

There are pleasant and unpleasant experiences, as well as those that are neutral. The pleasant ones enhance the forgetful subject's certainty and enjoyment of its identity as a particular thing in a past series of experiences. These are positively prehended and the previous pleasant experience is repeated. Experiences that were unpleasant, that is, threatening to the subject's self-image (identity), or disagreeable to it, are negatively prehended for the most part. If it is necessary that they be prehended in a current experience in order to correct the exaggerations of the self-image, they often do so only in symbolic form in dream or vision. They may be ignored in the waking experiences that follow the dream, and if they are they may well enter subsequent waking experiences explosively, subordinating and distorting other prehended elements that enter into the experience. Such explosive appearances of painful experiences from the past can destroy the forgetful subject's self-image.

If, on the other hand, dreams are taken note of in subsequent waking experiences, the knowledge they convey can be healing – that is, it can

lead to adjustments in the self-image that will render the original experience, or subsequent ones of a similar nature, less threatening or painful.

Knowledge of other places and times, other selves

In the worldview of contemporary global culture with its concept that all knowledge results (directly or indirectly) from sensory data, a large number of phenomena cannot be explained, and so are dismissed as invalid knowledge. Indeed, such phenomena are often considered to be due to some malfunctioning of the body.

In the worldview being described here, such experience is validated as true knowledge and the means by which it is obtained is readily explained in terms of first principles.

A friend dreamed of visiting the pyramids in Egypt. He had never been there in waking life, but had formed the impression from photographs he had seen that the sides of the pyramids were smooth and even. (This incident occurred nearly a century ago.) In the dream, however, he saw that the massive blocks of which they were made are stepped and very roughly hewn. This he confirmed later on an actual (that is, a waking) visit to the pyramids.

Occasionally situations, people and things from a past time are recalled. These experiences are vivid and often very emotionally-charged. A person in a present experience feels certain that he or she is the same as the person in particular previous experiences. Termed 'past life experiences', such instances have now been reliably documented in terms of physical details and the testimony of others. Such experiences often result in a better understanding of, and help in solving, difficult problems of his or her contemporary waking life.

In all these cases, actual experiences from the past, or karmic seeds, are being prehended in a current episode of experiencing. The archives of *Rta*, however, is not compartmentalised by person – for the simple reason that there are no persons as enduring entities. Nevertheless, individual

seeds are classified by the communities in which they participated when those communities were being continuously propagated. This type of classification is concurrent with the classification of types mentioned in Chapter 10. When a seed is prehended in a current episode of experiencing there is a tendency for it to 'drag along' other members of that community in succeeding episodes, so that a current community resembles, in some important ways a 'dead' community, thus 'resurrecting' it. In this way a current person may have the vague feeling that he or she is the same, in important ways, as a person that 'died' before he or she was 'born'. This feeling is vastly strengthened where it is corroborated by historical facts about that deceased person. It is as if the deceased person is re-embodied ('re-incarnated'). Many psychotherapists have demonstrated the valuable healing effect such explicit knowledge may have for the current person.

A current episode can, and sometimes does, show affinities for certain seeds, but can, and sometimes does, prehend seeds of a disparate temporal community. This latter community may appear discontinuous with the one currently running: a different person appears in the place of the one that existed up to then. The appearance of an alternate person is necessary to the health of the original person. For example, an experience that severely threatens the identity of the original person is systematically negatively prehended in future episodes of experiencing. Yet, it cannot be denied acceptance for long. It may obtrude itself into a dream episode in a symbolic mode. Or it may be neutralised by becoming the starting point for the build-up of a separate identity (another person). This other identity then alternates with the original one. When identified with the other, there is no awareness of the original, and vice versa. In this way the consequences of the traumatic experience can play out without utterly destroying the original person who experienced it. Such an arrangement is, however, an expedient and cannot succeed in the long run.

Such people do not have one continuous identity in waking life, but two or more alternating identities. These are cases of so-called multiple personalities. Whether or not these experiences are really of two persons is debated by medical people. Such controversy is possible only in the

context of the worldview of contemporary global culture. From the standpoint of the worldview here suggested, no such controversy need arise; there is no doubt at all that such experiences are of two separate identities with little or no common elements. Two distinct temporal communities are being propagated alternatingly.

Insight

Insights are treated as true knowledge in this worldview. They are an essential input in the formation of our worldview. This is, as was explained in Chapter 3, a major departure from the customary Western approach to the construction of a system of primary concepts. How such insights occur has been described in some detail in that chapter. A summarising and concluding statement should be helpful at this stage.

The basis for, or core element of, an experience, any experience whatever, is an immutable, abstract relationship among various types of particulars of the object in that experience (the parts of a thing). Very generally this concept of core or primordial elements corresponds to the Pythagorean concept that the structure of manifest reality is determined by numbers and their relationships to each other. Unlike in the Pythagorean and later Platonic conception, however, these numerical determinants do not function independently of one another. Rather, they are integrated into, and form the basic weave of, the cosmic causal agency termed *Rta*. We only know of their existence when, in particular phenomena, they are momentarily exposed to view amidst the welter of detail in which they are clothed. Even this 'view' is usually no more than a feeling, though it has sometimes been captured in a mathematical equation or an enduring mythical symbol. In general, as G. C. Pande has said, the fabric of causal relationships governing manifest existence is 'neither a single law or form nor any system of laws or forms', but 'rather the ultimate pre-supposition of all specific types of order or systems of laws (Pande, 1990, p. 120)'.

Insights are experiences in which some aspect of *Rta* peeks through the flux of phenomena. These experiences give us a better understanding

of the meaning and purpose of phenomena than is otherwise possible. The occurrence of such peeks is necessary for the maintenance of a tolerable degree of cosmic health. They might be likened to feedback signals needed for the self-correction of a living system.

Coming down to details, it may be said that in an insight a karmic seed in the causal past is prehended which embodies in a particularly distinct way that aspect of *Rta* that must be revealed at the present moment. That experience in the past is itself a result of a long line of successive experiences in which the core theme has achieved ever greater clarity and power. Of course, it comes to the present episode dressed in some particular cultural attire. The challenge for the recipient of the insight is to divest it of this attire. This challenge is more easily met if the recipient knows of more than one dress in which it has appeared in the past – or, in other words, of the numerical and mythological symbolism in which it has been explained earlier. Increasing clarity may result finally in laying bare the organising theme, so that it is experienced as numbers themselves or their relationships, as geometrical forms, or as fundamental emotional configurations. The next challenge is then to clothe them in a suitable way for deployment in the ambient cultural milieu.

14
Sleeping and dreaming

It was pointed out in Chapter 2 that actual existents, the ultimate units of manifest existence, are of three types: waking, dream and deep sleep. Dream and deep-sleep episodes of experiencing have the same general structure as waking episodes, but give rise to very different types of experiences. Dream and deep sleep experiences also differ markedly from each other.

In Chapter 6 the nature of waking experience was described in detail, and the subsequent development of the system of primary concepts (Chapters 7 to 13) was done with reference to waking experience. In this chapter dream and deep sleep experiences will be described, and they will be explained in terms of the same system of primary concepts.

Any viable worldview must be able to offer a logical account of all three types of experiences within the framework of the set of definitions of all seven formative elements that is constructed. It is one of the shortcomings of the contemporary mechanistic, materialist worldview that no satisfactory explanations of dreaming and deep sleep have been found in terms of the primary concepts of that view. Indeed, such explanations are probably impossible.

In Chapter 3 a distinction was made between dreams of individual and transcendent significance. There our interest was in understanding transcendental insights which are the starting point for the formulation of new primary concepts. Dreams of individual significance were for this reason set aside. In this chapter the structure and function of all types of dream experience in general are described.

Dream

The best way of describing dream experiences is to contrast their general features with those of waking experiences. These differences will then be explained in terms of the mechanisms already described for waking episodes.

Dream and waking experience compared

There are four differences. First, while the subject in a waking experience identifies itself with a part of a physical thing (the body of a *Homo sapiens*) in the experience brought forth, it does not do so in a dream experience. The sense of the subject as a witness of a dream experience, and of being in that experience, are both present, but the subject is, so to speak, completely free-floating. It does not identify with any physical thing in the experience either explicitly or implicitly. The 'I' is intensely and intimately affected by the particulars of that experience, but only passively since there is no physical base from which it can experience itself as an active agent. Indeed, the emotional intensity of the dream is heightened by the inability of the subject to play an active role. The term 'experience' here is to be understood as being a series of sequential experiences that make up a particular dream temporal community.

In passing, it will be well to note that a dream experience is not one of detached participation. There is neither detachment in dream, nor participation in the sense in which a detached participant feels himself or herself interacting with his or her experience. There is no possibility for the subject to be detached since there is no identification to begin with. Such detachment is possible only in the waking state where there is simultaneous awareness of the identity of the subject with a particular thing, and at the same time an awareness of its transcendence of that thing. There is no real participation in a dream experience because the subject is an entirely passive recipient of experience.

A second feature of dream experiences that distinguishes them from waking experiences is that in the former there is no continuity among

individual experiences; there is no memory in my current dream of a previous dream.[1] In each dream the subject is isolated; it has no antecedents, nor does it anticipate any future for itself.

The use of the term 'my dream' in the previous paragraph leads to a third feature of a dream experience that distinguishes if from a waking experience. In a waking experience there can be a recollection of a past dream experience, and this is accompanied by the sense that the dream was 'mine'. In a dream experience, on the other hand, there is no recollection of a specific waking experience with an accompanying sense that it was 'my' experience.

A fourth difference between dream and waking experience is that in dreaming the mode of knowing an experience brought forth is predominantly emotional. In waking, the predominant modes are thinking and feeling. This accounts for the fact that physical things are generally vague and 'insubstantial' in dream, while they are clearly experienced in most waking episodes.

Explanations

Having noted these differences between dream experiences and waking experiences, it is now necessary to explain dream experiences in terms of the general mechanisms already formulated for waking experience.

Dream experiences are generally archetypal rather than what might be termed mundane, this latter term referring to the waking experiences described in Chapters 6 and 7. They embody the abstract organising themes (core or primordial themes) that underlie and shape things and events in mundane experiences. They are windows on *Rta*. The karmic seeds of dream experiences are stored in the archives of *Rta* in the 'bin' labelled 'archetypal themes' and in subsidiary bins labelled according to specific themes. Episodes that bring forth archetypal experiences prehend, in the first instance, seeds from these bins. Subsequently they may also prehend seeds of mundane experiences, using them to flesh out the dream images so as to give them contemporary relevance.

A dream experience is made up of things as is a mundane experience. And the things appear to be the same in both. There is, however, a vital difference. In a mundane experience the things are actual, but in a dream experience they are symbolic. A symbol is not the thing itself but a representation of it, a reference to it, or an evocation of it. Its purpose is to illustrate or make manifest the archetypal theme presented in the dream.

The subject of an experience cannot identify with a symbolic representation, but only with the actual thing. It also cannot identify with the abstract theme behind the symbol. In a dream the subject therefore remains unattached, or free-floating.

The function of a dream is not to body forth actual things and events, but to reveal the organisational patterns underlying them, patterns that cannot be directly experienced, or even inferred from the things and events themselves. This accounts for their impersonal, 'dream-like' quality.

Each dream is an isolated revelation. In a given dream there is no memory or anticipation of what is revealed in other dreams. In one sense, however, a dream does have a context, a frame of reference beyond itself. When the seed of a dream experience is prehended in a waking episode (that is, it is 'remembered'), and its meaning is relevant to a past waking experiences of a given temporal community, then the subject of the waking experience recognises it as 'my' dream. Each such remembered dream, though absolutely distinct from all 'my' other dreams, is in fact linked to them because they are all 'mine'; they have a bearing on the unfolding drama of 'my' life. The seeds of dream experiences are thus recognised as relevant because the things they utilised to dress up their messages, and thus make them intelligible, are those communities that have been formed in the course of my waking 'life', or at least have been utilised in defining that life.

As was said a moment ago, the function of dreams is to reveal the organisational patterns underlying the things and situations of my life. The importance of such revelations cannot be over-emphasised. They are indispensable if we are to understand and orient ourselves to the demands of *Rta*. A failure or unwillingness leads to avoidable suffering, for one way

or another the demands of *Rta* will be met. It also leads to meaninglessness and a sense of helplessness, to a conviction that my life, and the lives of all things, is governed purely by chance.

As a footnote to the foregoing two paragraphs, the meaning of the term 'my life' may be stated in order to avoid confusion. "My life' is a temporal community of waking experiences in which the 'I' identifies itself with the body of a specific *Homo sapiens*.

Dream interpretation

The value of the revelations that occur in dreams depends upon our ability to understand their meaning and relevance to our waking life. The images of dream are symbolic, and to render up their messages they must be read symbolically. We must be able to read and understand the symbolic language of dream.

If we fail to recognise that dreams are symbolic, we will tend to interpret them literally. And, more importantly, we may, in view of their 'dream-like' quality, take them as glimpses of altogether different 'worlds' to those we construct from our everyday waking experience. It appears that traditional conceptions of heavens, hells, and the worlds of our ancestors owe their origin to the literal interpretation of dreams. Such conceptions are not without positive value in guiding the individual's life, and have been a mainstay of traditional cultures. The behaviour of the gods and demons that appear in dreams has relevance to our lives in a general way. These dreams are undoubtedly the basis for many valuable myths. Literal interpretations, however, generally lack specificity for my life and its immediate concerns.

Coming now to the symbolic reading of dreams, two different methods can be discerned: the fixed meaning mode, and, what might be termed the 'flexible' mode in which meaning in a specific case is sought in terms of dream's context. The fixed meaning mode is common in traditional cultures. If a woman about to deliver a child is, in a dream, chased by a large, ferocious, black dog, she might, in the fixed meaning mode, interpret

it as a sign that she is about to die. Traditional interpretation equates black dog with death in all circumstances. In the flexible mode she might relate the dog symbol to a fear of death that she understandably feels in view of a previous difficult delivery. The first interpretation may well induce panic or despair or both, the latter might generate the conviction that death is a possibility and my fear is legitimate, but that I must deal with it coolly. To switch to another common dream symbol, a snake, in the flexible mode of interpretation, may symbolise a wily adversary, a wise being, or a phallus – or any number of other things.

By ruminating on the snake symbol as it appears in a specific dream, its meaning may be revealed by the new light it throws on a situation in my waking life. 'Rumination' may include an intentional exercise of 'creative imagination' in which the dream symbol is held in awareness while observing and noting whatever further thoughts or images appear. They are supplementary thoughts orimages that will clarify and amplify the original dream symbol. They are also glimpses into the subtle patterns of *Rta*; they are akin to dream even though occurring in the waking state, and they in turn need to be interpreted flexibly.

Glimpses of the patterns of *Rta* underlying the mundane worlds are essential if we are to participate intelligently and joyfully in the overall creative process. If dreams are routinely recalled and attempts made to understand and act on them, glimpses into what lies below the surface of our mundane experiences will occur spontaneously in the waking state as well in the form of daydreams, visions synchronicities and omens[(2)]. And even such ordinarily mundane things as a flower and a grain of sand take on a deep meaning ('flower in the crannied wall', the 'world in a grain of sand'). The symbols of the Tarot cards that turn up in a properly done lay are, if flexibly interpreted, a useful tool in accessing the patterns of *Rta*.

The use of the term 'dream' in this chapter must be understood to include experiences that are 'individual' and 'transcendent', in the sense in which these have been defined in Chapter 3. The former is excluded from the term 'insight' in that context. In this chapter both types of

experiences are being covered together. 'Ordinary' or individual dreams, which constitute the bulk of dream experiences, refer to the need for and possibilities of aligning ordinary waking experience with the demands of *Rta* as smoothly as possible. Transcendental or 'big' dreams refer to the possibilities for, and the means of, overcoming identification of the subject with a thing in the circumstances of current mundane experiencing. Both individual and transcendental dreams appear unexpectedly because they reveal what was till then hidden under the surface of mundane experiencing. Once revealed, their relevance for current mundane individual experiences becomes evident.

The term 'individual' in the foregoing paragraph must be understood as meaning 'with reference to the individual I imagine myself to be' – that is, with reference to that temporal community in a waking experience with which the subject identifies itself. The detached participant accepts such identification as convenient, but not absolute.

'Big' dreams are unmistakable. They have a numinous quality about them, and stand out from other dreams in terms of their clarity, their vividness and their impact on the dreamer. They often feature a spiritual teacher, a sacred place or sign, or simply a verbal or written message of overwhelming import.

Some people say that they never dream. It is my experience that this simply means that they do not notice their dreams and so do not bring memories of them through as waking experiences. It seems to be the case that the intention to take dreaming as an important, not to say vital, part of life facilitates dream recall and their interpretation. The attempt to understand dreams further facilitates recall. The attempt to draw out the meaning from the symbol of dream can be likened to a dialogue with it. The more we engage in such dialogue – with the intention of better understanding our individual selves and our transpersonal destiny – the more open it becomes. It is certainly a common experience that an unsuccessful attempt to understand a particular dream elicits follow-up or supplementary dreams that throw additional light on the original dream symbol. And sometimes, when we have understood a dream and acted on

that understanding, we receive a confirmatory dream – a 'pat on the back' or a 'well done', as it were.

The use of the phrase 'transpersonal destiny' in the previous paragraph perhaps calls for a word of comment. This worldview does not lay down the law in this respect; whether or not there is a universal 'human destiny' or not is being left open. The general drift of this narration is certainly in the affirmative, and what that destiny is, is even made explicit – that is, becoming a detached participant. This has always been self-evident to many, whatever the worldview in which they participate and in whatever way they define such a destiny. And to others it has not.

A moment ago it was suggested that dream experiences interspersed among waking experiences are essential for a healthy and meaningful life – a life in reasonable harmony with all that is and all that happens. People who do not notice their dreams and who even say that they do not dream are not exempt from this generalisation. Such people still undoubtedly daydream, have fantasies, and are subject to compulsive behaviour – probably to a greater degree than those who take their dreams seriously. One way or another, the subtle patterns determining the course of outer events intrude themselves into the flow of waking experience. It does, therefore, appear that dreams or dream-like experiences are inevitable.

A word about current concepts of dream interpretation

The conceptual tools developed by psychotherapists during the past century have made it possible to take advantage of dream experience. Among these are the concepts of the unconscious mind, personal and collective, and the archetypes of the collective unconscious. There are, however, two problems with these concepts as a whole.

The first problem is that they are entirely empirical and find no anchorage in the primary concepts of the worldview of contemporary global culture. As a result they are not legitimate aspects of our culture's picture of the way 'the' world 'really' is, and their use is limited. Sigmund Freud appears finally to have ignored this problem when he found that he was unable to

put his analytical scheme on a 'scientific' footing, and, indeed, there is no legitimate alternative to ignoring it given the concepts of the materialist worldview. C. G. Jung, on the other hand, insisted that the conceptual categories that he postulated are grounded in the material body – and thereby created another problem. He said, in effect, that all psychic phenomena are biologically determined. His 'archetypes of the collective unconscious', for example, are genetically determined (Jung, 1976, p. 60). With the genetic determination of even physical traits being vigorously challenged today, this explanation appears even more far-fetched now than when he proposed it. (See also Appendix 1 *Bodies and minds*.)

Such eager, uncritical acquiescence in the materialist worldview of contemporary global culture has serious consequences. Regarded as biologically-grounded phenomena, the disharmonies in waking experience which dream experiences highlight and explain are seen as being potentially remediable by manipulating brains and genes either physically or chemically.

Here again the uncongenial conceptual ambience of the modern world for truly brilliant scientific innovation is illustrated. A new ambience, a new worldview, is needed to set off properly the achievements of such geniuses as Darwin, Freud and Jung, and to vindicate the stubborn refusal of Einstein to acquiesce in the inevitability of chance. By the term 'set off properly' I mean that intuitions and theories such as theirs must be seen as explainable in terms of accepted first principles or primary concepts. When this is done, the theories would likely have led to more effective and wholesome practices than they have so far done. One of the tests of the utility of the worldview being sketched here will be its ability to do just this. This chapter, read in conjunction with the section on memory in Chapter 13 and with Appendix 1, will suggest the essential features of a more adequate conceptual format for interpreting dream experience and using it for healing.

Other dream-like experiences

The full range and complexity of types of episodes of experiencing is too great to permit a simple, neat classification into dreaming and waking.

In Chapter 3 it was seen that many insights occur in the in-between, hypnogogic and hypnopompic states, the states between waking and sleeping and sleeping and waking, respectively. They are 'dream like' states, even if not technically dreams, and their origin and purpose generally differ from the run-of-the-mill dream. It was also pointed out in Chapter 3 that visions, which are dream-like in character, are sometimes super-imposed upon, but do not supplant, waking experiencing. On the other hand, there are instances of what is called lucid dreaming in which a flow of waking experiences is super-imposed on a sequence of dream experiences so that the subject of the former is a knowing spectator of, and sometimes an active participant in, the latter. Other unclassifiable episodes are hypnotic, out-of-body and near-death experiences. These dream-like experiences, like dreams themselves, lack explanations in the worldview of contemporary global culture, and so are simply ignored by the mainstream.

A start can be made in explaining these mixed waking and dream experiences by noting that karmic seeds of both waking and dream experiences are prehended in a single episode of experiencing. In some the experience brought forth is primarily a waking experience and in others a dream experience. In both types the subject of the experience is taken to be the physical thing with which the subject identifies in waking experiences – the person.

In an out-of-body experience (obe) the subject of the experience is the person of previous waking experiences. The waking component of the experience is the actual thing with which the subject identifies in previous and subsequent waking experiences. But the experience is primarily a dream experience in that the subject is free-floating (metaphorically and literally). The content of this dream experience, however, is not a symbolic story, but a waking experience in which one part of the thing experienced is that community which, in a later experience, will be the locus of a subject that will claim the obe as its own. This dependent relationship of the dream body on the waking body is the distinguishing feature of an obe. In the dream the waking body is, however, always, as far as I know,

seen as sleeping. The ending of the sequence of episodes making up the overall experience is the merging of the dream and waking bodies just before waking.

Near-death experiences contain a number of universally-occurring features such as passing through a tunnel with a light at the end. This image can be thought of as symbolising the passage of the subject from one state to another; that is, from identification with a specific community in a series of waking experiences to its ending with the 'death' of that community. When the identification is revived at the last minute, the person 'comes back'. The subject, on waking, claims that he or she was in the process of 'passing beyond'.

In a hypnotic experience, like in other dream and dream-like experiences, the subject is passive. The events in the hypnotic experience, instead of just happening without any apparent cause, are directed by an individual (the hypnotiser) outside that hypnotic experience, who intrudes into it. This intrusion is the waking component of the experience; the dreamer hears and speaks to the hypnotiser. The hypnotiser was a feature of an immediately preceding waking experience of the hypnotised individual.

Deep sleep

Waking, dreaming and deep sleep are all episodes of experiencing that appear and disappear against the backdrop of pure awareness. The former two are awareness with content, the last content-less awareness. These three, and their inevitable alternation, are given facts of existence and are, in this book, said to be inescapable categories of thought – actually sub-categories of the category of 'the ultimate units of manifest existence'.

In waking and dream episodes of experiencing, antecedent experiences – the seeds of previous experiences – are prehended and processed to produce a new experience of things, both actual and symbolic. In a deep sleep experience no antecedent experiences (seeds) whatsoever are prehended, so that the new experience brought forth is a blank – that is, contentless. In other words, all seeds are negatively prehended. The

episode is, like the other types of episodes, an active, living process. It culminates in a satisfaction that is blank, but none the less satisfying, for it is restful. There is nothing more welcome after a long period of waking than to fall into sleep.

That deep sleep is an experience is attested by the feeling, on the resumption of waking experiences, that 'I slept', 'I did not know anything', and that it (sleep) was restful. If it were not an actual existent it could not exist as a datum to be prehended by a subsequent waking episode.

In that subsequent waking experience there is an awareness that there was a pause in the flow of the sequence of similar episodes that gives rise to the continuity of personal identity. On the resumption of the waking sequence, there is a sense that time elapsed even though a sense of experienced time was suspended during the pause. Further, on waking the subject does not doubt that it existed during the pause, which indicates that it did in fact continue, even if in a disembodied (a state of non-identity with any thing) state. If sleep were a state of pure awareness, there would be no I in it, since, by definition, there is no subject or object (actual or potential) in pure awareness.

Notes

1. Sometimes a dream stops, and the dreamer awakens. A few minutes later he or she goes to sleep again and resumes the dream. We can say that it is a dream that was interrupted.
2. The term synchronicities refers to the phenomenon described by Jung (1976, Chapter 14). An omen is an event which is taken as a sign that something momentous or calamitous is likely to happen.

Part IV

Participation

15
The Detached Participant

The detached participant is a subject who has awakened to his or her true identity. He or she awakens to the fact that he or she is *in* an experience brought forth in an episode of experiencing, but not *of* it. This awakening can also be likened to a remembering.

The process of awakening or remembering may be thought of as occurring in two distinct phases. In the first phase a person awakes to or remembers his or her real identity with That Which Is, that which exists prior to the appearance of the experiencing I. In the second phase the 'One who has gone beyond' seemingly decides to participate in the manifest aspect of existence while at the same time not falling asleep or forgetting again, or, in other words, becomes a 'detached participant' in manifestation.

Who am I?

At the heart of every experience is the bare sense of duality, of a knower of an object and the object that is known. That knower, or subject, of the object of the experience cannot be a part of the experience, though it usually thinks that it is. This feeling of the subject that it is a part of the object experienced occurs because it forgets that it exists prior to the appearance of the objects experienced. It forgets, and then seeks its identity as a definite part of the object experienced, that is, the body of a particular *Homo sapiens*. It says 'I am this body'. It also says that all the body's attributes and functions are *mine*. This word *mine*, however, betrays a contrary thought (or feeling) – that I am other than this body. What this 'other' is, is indefinable, but so insistent, so certain, that it demands conceptualisation. This demand is sought to be satisfied in the concepts of the soul, the *atman*, or The Nothing. The concept of of a soul of Western

civilisation cannot succeed because the attempt is made to define it as something, or at least derivative of something – a body. The Indian Vedic notion of the atman is more successful because it recognised that the real I is not a body or a derivative of a body. Since it cannot be described as a thing in itself, resort is taken to symbolic statements.

> Two birds, fast bound companions,
> Clasp close the self-same tree.
> Of these two, the one eats sweet fruit;
> The other looks on without eating.
>
> On the self-same tree a person, sunken,
> Grieves for his impotence, deluded;
> When he sees the other, the Lord, contented,
> And his greatness, he becomes freed from sorrow.
>
> (Mundaka Upanishad, III, 3.1-2, Hume, 1931)

Thus while the subject in an experience knows the contents of its experience, it also 'knows' that its true identity is not in or with that experience. This latter, what has been termed 'true' knowledge in Chapter 13, is, however, generally overlooked and for all practical purposes forgotten. That this forgetting is a problem is mutely attested to by the frequency with which human endeavours end in sorrow and suffering. What is forgetting; what is remembering; how and why do they happen; and what is the outcome of remembering? It is the purpose of this chapter to attempt to answer all these questions.

Remembering

The I am is the first appearance in awareness of the manifest aspect of That Which Is. Already at this stage the 'I' of the I am has forgotten its true nature, and mistakenly seeks an identity in outwardness. Why this forgetting occurs we cannot say, any more than we can say why experiences appear at all. It is as if, with the first movement of the Dweller at the Source into outwardness, a veil were drawn across the I's path

blocking its view of the place from which it came. As the creative process continues, and the I am finds itself a part of the objective situation experienced, forgetfulness becomes almost total.

Forgetfulness appears to be an inevitable feature of manifestation. A latent possibility for remembering does, however, remain. Forgetting can have an ending (see Box 15.1, *Shakespeare on remembering*). Remembering is the birthright, so to speak of every forgetful subject in an experience, and with remembering comes the conviction that it is his or her destiny to remember.

I have lost sight of who the subject of an experience really is. The I in this sentence refers to the person that I think I am. It is this thought that is the problem. Somehow or other this thought must therefore be dismantled or made unnecessary. There are two different ways to do this: 1) enquire 'who am I'; and, 2) surrender the person I think I am to what is perceived to be real, or, in other words, allow this person to be subsumed by what is real. To the question, who am I, there is no conceivable answer because whatever answer is attempted will be a concept framed in terms of the objects of the experiences by means of which the person defines himself or herself. There is an answer, however, and it can be known, though only by becoming that whom one asks after, the I in the question 'who am I'. When the real I is thus known, the person disappears, except as a useful fiction.

Surrender also eliminates the person by allowing it to be swallowed up by what one conceives to be real I. No matter that no conception can ever capture the real I; that this is so is realised only after the I is known. A conception of the real may be a traditional one that has proved its efficacy in the past. Or, the effort to surrender to the real may focus on an individual who himself or herself is felt or sensed to have succeeded in getting rid of the person, and is thus an example of the real I in a living human form, or what has in this book been termed a detached participant.

With both ways the initiative must be taken by the person – or so it seems. The actual experience of those who have embarked on this work,

Box 15.1 Shakespeare on Remembering

Shakespeare briefly and beautifully described the normal human condition of forgetfulness and the means of remembering.

Poor soul, the centre of my sinful earth,
Fool'd by those rebel powers that thee array,
Why dost thou pine within and suffer dearth,
Painting thy outward wall so costly gay?
Why so large cost, having so short a lease,
Dost thou upon thy fading mansion spend?
Shall worms, inheritors of this excess,
Eat up thy charge? Is this thy body's end?
Then, soul, live thou upon thy servant's loss,
And let that pine to aggravate thy store;
Buy terms divine in selling hours of dross:
Within be fed, without be rich no more:
So shalt thou feed on Death that feeds on men,
And Death once dead, there's no more dying then.

The soul in this sonnet may be taken as the one Subject of all experiences, as it is felt in any one of them. The 'sinful earth' is the mistaken identity of the subject with the body. As long as this identity persists there is folly and suffering, the folly of seeking security and pleasure from that which is impermanent, and the suffering occasioned by the fear of its inevitable death. More generally, Death is the perpetual dying of all that comes to birth in episodes of experiencing. Identification devours men and women such as they take themselves to be; remembering, one devours that illusion – and then watches calmly the birth and death of all manifest things.

and have even a little headway with it, shows them that the initiative is not really theirs. Logically, no one can want to work for the elimination of himself or herself, or rather his or her conception of who he or she is. All that can be said is that there is a movement toward the elimination of the

person which, at the outset, the person thinks he or she initiates and sustains – because he or she mistakenly thinks he or she is a person. But, since it is difficult to do nothing, he or she can make a start by attempting to do nothing, at least not actively.

With respect to the question who am I, this is attempted by focusing on that question, excluding all other questions or thought things, and at the same time attempting to feel the presence of the I in one's inmost being. One's inmost or real being is not in the body; it is nowhere and yet everywhere. But to begin with it is sufficient to conceive of it at some specific place within the body.

The effort to do nothing can also be described as attempting to hold the pure thought thing 'I' and not allow it to find symbolic representation as a physical thing. As often as it does identify with a form, it is to be pulled back from that form.

For some, it is useful at the outset to be explicit about what the I is not. It cannot be anything that changes, anything that has a beginning and an ending. Thus it cannot be the body or any of its functions, or even, as we have seen, the soul. It cannot be the body because the body, like the experience of which it is an objective feature, is absent in deep sleep, and also because it appears at birth (as a newly-formed, temporal community) and disappears at death (the dissolution of that community).

The result of this exercise is that, in the quiet and passivity, the receptivity, that it encourages, the answer will come. Its coming is felt, for it is not an answer that can be formulated in any conceivable manner. It comes as a direct knowing, which is a not knowing in the usual sense of this word, but in the sense of identity with what is real, with That Which Is. That identity is known in the silence, and this is the 'answer' to the question, who am I. Once known, it can not again be forgotten.

The destruction of the person is generally not achieved without effort and voluntary suffering. As the self-defining, self-preserving attitudes and behaviour of that person lose their power, emotions of loss and insecurity usually result. These are often experienced before a compensating new sense of identity with the real I arises. On the one hand, a diminishing

sense of being a person makes it easier for the aspirant to reach out and attempt to grasp that which at this point still seems to be other, and on the other hand, as the sense of identity with the true I waxes, the waning of the sense of being a person follows naturally. Identity oscillates between the two. This oscillation may continue for a lifetime, or there may be a steady overall movement toward true identity. To foster this process toward true identity, a number of exact disciplines have been devised to foster this process. These, however, are not of immediate concern to us in the context of this book.

What is of more concern are the questions: who is the aspirant who strives, or at least appears to strive, for a shift of viewpoint, and what impels or leads it on? The aspirant, to the extent it understands adequately the nature of its task, is not the person because its aspiration is inimical to that person. Nor is it other than the person since it uses the functions of that person in the pursuit of its aspiration. We might say that the aspirant is the person into whom a vague presentiment of what it means to be free of that person enters. The source of the presentiment is, of course, the real I. At the same time an inexplicable power enters into him or her impelling him or her to act contrary to his or her own (perceived) best interest. This power is all important. It awaits our consideration in the next section.

The starting point for the process of dismantling the person is a sense of dissatisfaction with all that ordinary life has to offer. It may come early in life, or later after he or she has more or less successfully achieved the ends of human life as defined in his or her ambient culture. When dissatisfaction comes, its manner of coming, and the force with which it impinges on him or her are seemingly inscrutable, but we may be assured that in all cases its coming is a necessary movement in the working out of *Rta*. Where and when necessary, the seeds of previous episodes which featured such aspiration are selectively prehended by a current episode in which aspiration is to be the dominant theme.

Typically, there is an oscillation between greater identification with the I and the person, with corresponding elation and despair for the aspirant, in the course of its transformation. These swings from one to the other are

often sudden and seemingly inexplicable. From the point of view of the entire process, as seen at its completion, and even dimly felt during the process itself, these to and fro swings are necessary for continued progress. The periods of bondage to the person, accompanied by a memory of freedom from the person, force the aspirant to take stock: to what extent, and in what ways, has he or she so far severed its identification with the person. The periods of joyful experience of identity with the I are 'thrown in', so to speak, to sustain the aspirant's effort. The final complete emancipation from the person is the culmination of the process. There is no falling back into bondage after this.

Sleep and awakening

Forgetfulness is often likened to a state of waking sleep. We are apparently awake but are actually asleep to the reality of who we are. G. I. Gurdjieff puts it this way:

> When a man [or woman] awakes,
> he [or she] can die;
> when he [or she] dies,
> he [or she] can be born. (1)

In this saying, when the person awakes to his or her real identity, he or she dies as a person, and is reborn as a detached participant.

Continuing with this metaphor of waking sleep, awakening is sometimes said, and, I think, universally felt, to be due to a wake up call. Awakening, or remembering, is never felt to be self-initiated, but always as coming from 'outside' or 'beyond'. The 14th century Christian mystic Rulsman Merswin said:

> All men [and women] are *called* to their origin.
>
> (Underhill, 1993, p.132)

It seems to me that it would be permissible to infer from Merswin's statement that a person is not only called *to* the origin, but also called *by* the origin. At least I think he would have agreed with this inference of mine. Put this way, it would account for the sense of an active force or flow

of energy at work, a sense shared by all who have undertaken the transformative journey. The call is insistent, usually subtle, but can sometimes be violent. At least temporarily it overwhelms, subdues, and eclipses the stubborn sense of personhood. Ultimately, it destroys the person completely.

The attractive force exerted by the origin (Source) is impersonal, but is experienced as marvellously suited to the context of each person. That is, the reminder or wake-up call is framed in terms that are specific to the individual and his or her exact situation.

To many, awakening or remembering is experienced as a gift.

> Do not boast of your possessions, if you have any, nor of the influence of your friends; but glory in God, who gives all things and desires above all things to give you Himself.
>
> (Thomas a Kempis, *The Imitation of* Christ, Translated by Sherley-Price, 1952, p. 34)

It is often felt as a gift, for though it may appear to be a result of efforts at detachment from one's identity as a person, it may come at anytime without such effort. Great suffering can culminate in a sudden awakening. The experience of an Indian woman of an encounter with the 20th-century sage Ramana Maharshi is an example here.

> Echammal had been a happy wife and mother in the village of Mandakolathur, but before the age of twenty-five she lost first her husband, then her only son, and then her only daughter. Stunned by her bereavement, tortured by memory, she could find no rest….Some friends told her of a young swami at Tiruvannamalai who brought peace to those who sought. At once she set out. With a friend she climbed the hill to the cave where the swami lived. She stood in silence before him, not telling her grief. There was no need. The compassion shining in his eyes was healing. A whole hour she stood, no word spoken, and then she turned and went

> down the hillside to the town, her steps light, the burden of her sorrow lifted. Daily she visited the swami thereafter. He was the sun that had dispersed her clouds. She could even recall her loved ones now without bitterness.
>
> (Osborne, 1970, p. 53)

She spent the rest of her life at Tiruvannamalai devoting herself to service of the swami and his followers, leading a life of detached participation.

In another context, that of the person who has heeded an initial call and who is experiencing the inevitable hopelessness that is at times a feature of the way on which he or she has embarked, the gift is sometimes experienced as a glimpse or suggestion of what is to come.

> Then will he sometimes peradventure send out a beam of ghostly light, piercing this cloud of unknowing that is betwixt thee and him: and shew thee some of his privity, the which man may not, nor cannot speak.
>
> (*The Cloud of Unknowing*, Wolters [tr.], 1978, p. 47)

Ultimately, however, the metaphor of force is not satisfactory. There is no interaction between things. It is a matter of what is real. Usually what is unreal, or only relatively real, is taken to be all there is, obscuring what is real. When the cover of unreality is removed, we are bound to see what is really there – and we understand the cover for what it is. Certain circumstances such as the proximity of particular persons or the 'atmosphere' of particular places and times, and certain 'freak' occurrences may help the person to 'see'. The following traditional Indian story is often told to illustrate this point.

A man was walking on a forest path in the evening. Being twilight, visibility was poor. Suddenly, he came upon a snake on the path. He was overcome with fear, and quickly backed off and took a detour. Next morning, in full light, he walked back along the same path. At the spot where he had seen the snake he saw a piece of rope. He immediately understood that the 'snake' he thought he saw the evening before was nothing but this

piece of rope, and he laughed to himself. He stepped over the rope and proceeded, or perhaps he picked up the rope and put it to one side so that it would not create the same problem again in the evening. If not removed he would probably again see a snake in the evening, and might not be able to trust his new knowledge completely, and would thus again be overcome by fear.

The loss of the sense of being a person is also often depicted as the movement from bondage to freedom.

> Why do you stay in the prison when the door is so wide open?
>
> (Jelaluddin Rumi, translated by Barks, 1995, p. 3)

In these lines Rumi points out that we are imprisoned in our own inadequate notion of the subject. The prison door being open symbolises the fact that there is really no prison at all; if the notion of a person as a self-existent real thing is questioned, that person disappears.

In another context Rumi uses the metaphor of drunkenness to describe the sleep of forgetfulness of who we are and where our home is, and the call to awake. The tavern offers us the wine of delight,

> But after some time in the tavern, a point comes, a memory of elsewhere, a longing for the source, and the drunks must set off from the tavern and begin the return. 'It's 4 A.M. Nasruddin leaves the tavern and walks the town aimlessly. A policeman stops him. "Why are you out wandering the streets in the middle of the night?" "Sir", replies Nasruddin, "if I knew the answer to that question, I would have been home hours ago!"'
>
> (Jelaluddin Rumi, translated by Barks, 1995, p. 1)

Must one awake?

The call to awaken is thus a given feature of manifest existence. We can ignore it only at our peril. In the end it will not be denied. Or so it

seems. Our efforts to continue sleeping only intensify the call until a crises supervenes. Then the choice of listening or not seems to be taken out of our hands. To continue sleeping comes to be seen worse than awakening.

Francis of Assisi, as related earlier (pp. 54-5), resisted the call for years, or, as the legend has it, attempted to 'flee the hand of God'. Then one dramatic insight caused him to accept the call, altering his life irrevocably. The 'attempt to flee God's hand' has been portrayed by Francis Thompson in his poem *The Hound of Heaven*. Here is another instance of this same theme. A child of eight years, sleeping alone in an absolutely dark room, awoke in the middle of the night, overwhelmed with the certainty that all ordinary human enterprises and achievements are ultimately, absolutely meaningless, and that ordinary human life has no purpose. Needless to say he was frightened. But he managed to forget this insight and to pursue a conventional human existence. But periodically through the ensuing decades he was similarly overwhelmed, repeatedly and with ever increasing intensity, until a breaking point came. In a flash his perspective changed radically and permanently, ending all resistance.

In all these examples there is the initial call, the fright, the flight, and at last surrender – and more importantly, help.

There are particular time periods in life, the second half of the first decade, the second half of the second, and the middle of the fifth, when the person is particularly liable to the incursion of such insights into the illusory nature of what he or she thinks he or she is. This may be due to the stresses that often occur during these periods, offering cracks through which insights of this sort can slip in. In terms of the definition of the person as a self-existent entity in a self-existent real world these insights are seen as, at best, 'growing pains' and 'mid-life crises', and, at worst, as pathological. The latter view, which issues in treatments to 'restore normality', is particularly regrettable. From the point of view of our new worldview, these insights are moments of sanity in an otherwise delusive adventure termed 'my' life.

And, as with all insights, such insights as we are here discussing claim our serious attention because they are so common and have been seen

as so significant as to have been generalised in myth and story. We need only to reflect for a moment on 'children's' stories like *Sleeping Beauty* to understand this.

The mystery of the detached participant

The term the 'One who has gone beyond' is not to be taken literally. A voluntary return to the sphere of manifest existence is possible and in fact seems to be the rule. The One becomes a detached participant. In order to do this It must have a suitable locus within an experience to serve as a base for Its involvement. That locus will be the same as that of the person it earlier mistakenly thought it was. To the onlooker the detached participant will be similar to that person, but it will differ subtly. Or, the detached participant may be radically different from that person in outlook and behaviour.

The detached participant acts positively in the maintenance of cosmic health. Acting from a sense of being a person usually creates disease. To phrase this thought less bluntly, we can say that an action proceeding from a sense of identification with a manifest locus, that is, from a person, often strikes a discordant note, sometimes violently so, upsetting the relative harmony of *Rta* and requiring the introduction of equally harsh notes to counteract it. In short, persons tend to create suffering and despair. The detached participant, acting with greater circumspection and compassion, does not itself suffer or despair, and by it activities, gross and subtle, fosters a return to and the maintenance of more stable, equitable conditions which diminish the suffering and despair of others. Not only does the detached participant do this directly, but also by the creation of an enduring influence (that is, powerful karmic seeds) that initiates and sustains future aspirational experiences throughout the totality of manifest existence.

To those who are still persons there is something ineffable about the detached participant, something that they cannot quite understand. This is to be expected because only a detached participant himself or herself

can understand another detached participant. That understanding is possible as they are both only the One who has gone beyond, or That Which Is. 'Understanding', when used in this context, is the same as 'being' That Which Is. Without being That Which Is there is no understanding it. The detached participant is essentially That, and knows it; persons are also essentially That but they do not know it.

To repeat, a person cannot know who or what the detached participant really is. Superficially the detached participant appears to be just another person, and to a person can appear in no other way. And yet, in the person there is a subtle intimation that the detached participant that appears in his or her experience is more than a person. There is something about the detached participant that suggests a life in a different reality than that of persons. And so, the detached participant is felt to be both a person and not a person. The 'something else' sets up in the person a corresponding inner vibration, as it were, suggesting the possibility that he or she is not what he or she thinks he or she is, and that he or she too could become what the detached participant is. In short, the detached participant emanates a subtle influence that can initiate and sustain a person in his or her quest for that which he or she really is. This is the message in the story of Echammal.

Note

1. This quote is a collation of separate statements made by G. I. Gurdjieff as reported in Ouspensky (1949) made by Pramila Jackson around 1975.

Appendix 1

Bodies and minds

In the worldview of contemporary global culture human bodies are considered to be discrete, relatively enduring physical entities, coming into existence at birth and going out of existence at death. They are real entities, their existence being known through direct sense perception. The status of mind is, on the other hand, uncertain. It is not an entity that can be known by direct perception as the body can be. Is the mind a real entity? Or is it just a manner of speaking, a 'something' that is supposed to manufacture thoughts? Most people suppose that this 'something' is not the physical brain which appears to be the final destination of sensory impulses because it is unclear how sensory inputs to the brain can give rise to thoughts. Moreover, simple organisms like bacteria clearly do not have a brain, but arguably have thoughts; at least they respond intelligently to environmental stimuli.

There are many other problems as well. The activities of the body and thoughts seem to be related, at least to some extent. It can be argued that every bodily action is preceded by a thought of performing just that action. It has not been possible to explain why this is so. Then there is the matter of thoughts that arise independently of any sensory inputs; what can be the source of such spontaneous, seemingly uncaused thoughts? And how do we account for emotions? On an analogy with 'the mind manufactures thoughts' idea, can we say that they are produced in a separate emotional factory?

In the system of basic concepts here being described, a body is a physical thing, a temporal community that extends over a finite series of experiences. If the subject of those experiences identifies itself with a particular body, then the body becomes its body. Similarly for thoughts; they are thought things. These thought things are produced, like physical

things, by the process termed an episode of experiencing. They become 'my' thoughts if I identify with them. There is no entity 'mind' that produces thoughts. The concept is incongruous – and unnecessary – in this worldview.

Similarly, emotional things and feeling things are produced in the same way as physical and thought things. A person says that they are his or her emotions and feelings.

The inter-relationships among individual experiences of different types of things are not a matter of simple causation, but of mutual causation among them all – that is, among all actual entities. Each is caused by every other, and, in turn, causes every one of the others. Thus, it is simplistic, misleading, and dangerous to say 'this action was caused by that thought', or 'this thought is the result of these sensory inputs'. There may indeed be instances of what appear to be simple, direct, exclusive causal relationships, but they are usually poor guides to developing an adequate understanding of what has happened.

As with so many other problems that arise in contemporary life, the mind-body problem is the result of a defective worldview. From the perspective of a more adequate worldview, such as is presented here, it is not a problem at all.

Appendix 2

Substance and form

In attempting to answer perennial question 2 a (what finally, actually exists) Aristotle pointed out that we must break it down into two further questions if we are to come to grips with it. These further questions are:

2 a i) what is the substance of the thing; that is, what is it made up of: and,

2 a ii) what is the form of the thing?

Whatever answer we formulate for question 2 a must include answers to both these further questions: what things are in themselves and why they appear as they do.

In the history of Western thought Aristotle's advice has never been followed. Attention has been focused either on substance or on form, completely neglecting the other. The work of Democritus, Galileo, Descartes and Newton was focused on substance, whereas the work of Pythagoras, Aristotle, Leonardo da Vinci, Kant and Goethe and focused on form (Capra, 2007, p. 168).

The Aristotelian science of medieval Europe was dominated by a focus on form. Actual entities were described in terms of their form, and explained in terms of the imposition of abstract organising patterns, or 'forms', on substance. The substance of which they are made up is, in the absence of forms to individuate it and to confer qualities on it, an amorphous, indescribable 'stuff'. This stuff was vaguely referred to as that of which the object is made (Aristotle's material cause). Aristotle himself failed to follow his own advice.

Aristotle's concept of form, as explicated in the context of a living, growing organism, was problematic for two reasons. He said that an organism 'grows' towards the ideal adult form of its species. However, the adult form of every individual of a given species is different, at least in its

details. This implies as many forms as there are individuals. Moreover, an organism's form changes moment to moment as it grows; literally it is a different form at each point of time. This is the same as saying that it is a different organism from moment to moment. To maintain that it is the same organism it would be necessary to show that its substance changes, which cannot be done since there is no definition of substance *per se*. The statement that it 'grows towards it adult form' thus seems to be a very inadequate and clumsy explanation for what actually is observed to happen.

With the scientific revolution of the 17th century, finally consolidated by Newton, the focus dramatically shifted to substance. The form of an atom was considered to be innate, manifest as its qualities (size, shape and mass). The problem with this concept of substance is the difficulty in describing and explaining how aggregates of atoms acquire definite form. The interactions of any two atoms can be described and explained in terms of Newtonian mechanics, but for multiple, simultaneous interactions of more than two atoms descriptions and explanations in these terms are impossible.

A logical flaw in this concept of atoms is that their so-called properties are not inherent in the atoms themselves, but rather descriptions of the relationships among them (Whitehead, 1929, p, 309). In themselves, they are indefinable.

Today, the focus is beginning to return to form, particularly in the biological and social sciences with the development of systems theory and of powerful new geometrical concepts and techniques for describing form. More fundamentally the shift is occurring because of the logical difficulties that have appeared in the 20th century with the concept of the atom. Scientists have failed to find anything corresponding to the 17th concept of an atom. The most that can be said is that it seems to have shrunk to a dimensionless point. A system of these points, because of the relationships among them, gives each of these points the appearance of a perceptible object. In itself it is nothing at all, or, in other words, the concept of substance has again been pushed into the background, tacitly pre-supposed, but not defined.

In the system of basic concepts described in this book, Aristotle's injunction to define clearly both form and substance has been adhered to. The substance of an experience is the karmic seeds it prehends and its form is determined by the immediate necessities of the causal agency, *Rta,* and the possibilities offered by the primordial themes that it deploys. Using these alternative concepts, the problems encountered with the older concepts can be avoided, and neither substance nor form is lost sight of.

Glossary

This glossary gives brief definitions for ready reference of each of the terms used in the development of the system of concepts described in this book. Underlined or bracketed words or phrases refer the reader to other headings in the Glossary.

Actual existents

The term actual existent refers to one of the seven formative elements of experiencing. It is that element which directs our attention to the consideration of what the basic units of existence are assumed to be. In this book these units are experiences brought forth in episodes of experiencing. There are three sub-categories of experiences – waking, dream and deep sleep. Each experience has two modes and four types. The first mode is the experience in the present. The second is its continued existence as a karmic seed in the past. Four types of things that appear in and episode of experiencing: physical things, thought things, emotional things and feeling things.

Appearance

The common meaning of the word 'appearance' is to 'come into sight', or 'come into existence'. It is used in this sense in this book. What appears in an experience is a thing. Its appearance is the culmination of the process termed an episode of experiencing. It thus has a beginning, but, once created, it endures (*see* Karmic seeds).

The special meaning, also used in this narrative, is of an entity that is not real. In other words, it is an entity that fails to meet one or more of the following requirements: a real entity must be self-existent, never-changing, beginingless and endless. In terms of the third requirement the things that appear in experiences are unreal. (*see* Real)

This does not mean however that these appearances are to be ignored. Experiences appear in an endless parade. The parade cannot be stopped, and certainly cannot be ignored.

Since these appearances cannot be stopped, except temporarily under special conditions, they might be termed 'dependent realities'. They depend upon what is real, the background from which they emerge. Without a background of the real they could not exist (*see* Existence). The totality of appearances is termed 'manifest existence', as opposed to 'unmanifest existence'. If these two are seen as coeval, as 'aspects' of That Which Is, both are real.

Awareness

An awareness of something means a perception or knowledge of that something, be it a physical entity, a thought, an emotion or a feeling. The term implies a subject who is aware. This subject is the subject in all episodes of experiencing, and of the experiences brought forth by these episodes. The subject can be said to know these worlds (*see* Knowing). In this sense of awareness of something, awareness is termed 'consciousness' when referring to waking and dream experience, and 'unconsciousness' when referring to deep sleep. Consciousness is termed awareness of things, while unconsciousness is awareness of an absence of things.

Awareness exists prior to and independently of the experiences of waking, dreaming and deep sleeping. This is pure awareness, or awareness of being aware. There is neither subject nor object in pure awareness. A person can pass into a state of pure awareness, only then the person and the I are left behind.

Pure awareness is That Which Is. It is also pure being. Further, the state of pure awareness or pure being is blissful. The concept of the three-fold characterisation of That Which Is as being, awareness and bliss comes from the Indian Vedic tradition. In Sanskrit they are termed '*sat*', '*chit*' and '*ananda*'.

Being

No one denies, or can deny, that he or she exists. To deny, one must exist; there must be someone who denies. Phrased somewhat differently, I know that I exist. In fact, it is the only certain knowledge I have. What exists, or has being, what knows that it exists, however, is not the subject in experiencing, for that subject in the last analysis is only That Which Is. Only That Which Is can be said to be, for it has no beginning or ending. (*see* Existence *and* Knowing)

Bliss

That Which Is can be known when there is a cessation of experiencing (*see* Experience). Here the term 'known' is not used in its customary, present-day sense of gaining knowledge of a manifest entity. That Which Is is not a manifest entity and hence has no attributes by which it might be known. All knowing is of that which is not That Which Is. Further, there is no knower in the sense in which a subject of an experience is said to know an object. And yet, the cessation of experiencing is not a blank, a nothingness. 'Knowing' in this sense is simply being – and that is not nothingness, but only a 'no-thing-ness'. With the cessation of experiencing, pure Being rests in itself, undisturbed, blissful.

In ordinary usage the word bliss means great or perfect happiness. Happiness, in turn, means feeling pleasure and contentment. However, bliss is not pleasure, even of the most intense variety. Pleasure depends upon experience, but bliss is the condition that supervenes when experiencing ceases. Pleasure is dependent on the existence of pain, and in experiencing, the subject of experience, when it is identified with what is experienced, oscillates ceaselessly between these two states of pleasure and pain. Bliss is the absence of both. Bliss is felt when identification with pleasure and pain – that is, with the things that gives rise to them – does not occur. The state of detached participation (*see* Detached participant) is a blissful one.

Categories of experiencing

(*see* Formative elements of experiencing)

Coherence

Coherence is a technical term used in this book to indicate the extent to which the primary concepts of a worldview cohere or 'hang together' logically as a system. A worldview is coherent if these concepts do not contradict one another. Further, each of these definitions must presuppose all the others, or in other words none of the definitions will have any meaning when viewed in isolation from the rest, or from the system as a whole. An incoherent worldview leads to confusion of thought and action in every sphere of life.

An exception to this general definition of coherence must be made in the case of the primary concepts of the third of the perennial questions – what is real. What is real does not presuppose anything but itself, while all the other concepts presuppose it, as well as each other.

Community

The particular entity that appears in an experience is termed a thing. These things, in the concrescence phase of an episode of experiencing, are compared and then grouped to form larger and more complex things termed communities. This grouping may be repeated many times to give ever larger and more complex (or higher-order) communities. A complex community, once formed, persists when the experience of it passes into a latent state, and becomes a karmic seed.

Prehended (see Prehension) karmic seeds are compared and then grouped on the basis of the similarities that are found among them. There are three types of grouping, one based upon obvious causal affinity and the other on the affinity due to a shared characteristic element. In a community based upon causal affinity a series of seeds are prehended, each one of which is the most obvious cause of the one that immediately follows it; or, in other words, it is more like it than any other seed. This is a 'temporal community'. In a 'shared-characteristic' community the seeds that are grouped share a characteristic such as, say, a particular colour or geometrical shape, or they compliment each other in some way. The individual members are not related to one another causally, at least not

directly. Communities of mixed types and patterns form a community where there is a possiblity of their coming together form a coherent system.

Communities can be considered organisms because they come into existence and are maintained in existence by life. All communities from the simplest to the most complex are living, though the degree of 'liveliness' is proportional to their complexity.

Concrescence

The term concrescence refers to the sub-process in the larger process of an episode of experiencing in which the things in prehended karmic seeds are assembled into larger more complex things termed communities. (*see* Community) These more complex things are then prehended, and may undergo a secondary concrescence to form yet more complex and larger things. This alternation of prehension and concrescence continues until a final prehension is made, which terminates the episode in a final experience, or a satisfaction of the initial desire for an experience.

Detached participant

(*see* Subject)

Episode of experiencing

An episode of experiencing is the process by which a new experience is created. In this process the subtle impressions of previous experiences, or karmic seeds, are gathered up and processed to give a new and unique experience.

Each episode is an actualisation of the latent potential for manifestation present in the ground of all existence – That Which Is. In each the fourfold abstract structure of the Potential, a subject, an object and the field of interaction between them, is replicated and actualised.

The experience, and, at the same time, the experiencer of that experience, appear suddenly, and last for only a moment. They emerge

from the darkness of unmanifest existence, or That Which Is, persist for a moment, and then disappear. They follow one another rapidly and, when viewed as a series, that is as a temporal community (*see* Community), appear to be enduring entities. The process can be considered to occur in three phases: the phase of initial prehensions, the phase of concrescence, and the phase of a final prehension, also termed a satisfaction.

With the satisfaction, the episode is completed and the experience brought forth continues thereafter as a karmic seed.

Existence

To exist means to have objective reality. Such objective reality presupposes the absence of a subject who is aware of whatever it is that is said to exist. What exists is, even in the absence of someone to confirm it. These are the present-day dictionary definitions, and the meanings understood in contemporary global culture. In the materialist worldview of this culture it is quite possible for something to exist even in the absence of an observer; indeed, this is the critical defining feature of this worldview. In terms of the worldview being sketched here we are constrained to say that in the absence of a subject there can be no object, for these two necessarily arise and subside together. That from which they arise, and into which they subside, alone really exists. Nothing appearing in the field between this duality of subject and object can really be said to exist.

Experience

Experience is a 'practical contact with and observation of facts or events (Concise Oxford English Dictionary, 2002)'. As a verb it means an encounter with facts and events (Ibid.). The object of contact, observation or encounter is a thing that is the object in an experience. It is an actual existent. The subject of the experience is the Subject of all experiences, or That Which Is. The subject also comes to know (*see* Knowing) that thing. Technically it is a process in which karmic seeds, are prehended (*see* Prehension) to give a novel new thing in an episode of experiencing. This new thing then

becomes in turn a karmic seed or a datum available for prehension by all later episodes of experiencing.

Formative elements of experiencing

The seven formative elements of experiencing are the inevitable conceptual categories in terms of which any complete and viable answer to the second of the perennial questions – what is the nature of experience – must be formulated. A definition satisfying each category must be formulated such that each definition pre-supposes all the others. This means that none of them can be defined by ignoring or subordinating any of the others. Also they must not contradict each other. In other words, taken together, the seven definitions must form a coherent and logical system.

The seven categories are: actual existents, life, time, space, causation, the subject, and knowing.

This concept of formative elements derives from what Plato (in the *Timaeus*) termed 'brute facts'. Such facts cannot be explained in terms of anything more fundamental in our experience, nor can they be explained away. It derives also from the Vedic symbolism of the creator God who is helped in his work of bringing forth a world by his Seven Sisters.

I

With the activation of the Potential, the I or the subject in an experience, appears in awareness. A thing then appears, and in the normal course the I becomes identified with a particular part of that thing, the body of a *Homo sapiens* in a human episode of experiencing. If the I chooses to witness the content, and not identify with it but voluntarily participates in its activities, it is said to be a detached participant in that content.

Insight

Insights are things that reveal the abstract organisational principles that operate 'behind the scenes', so to speak, to determine the forms of

all things and events. The chief types of insight are intuitions, dream images, waking images and hypnogogic and hypnopompic images. Intuitions are initially formless, but subsequently given form, that is, become actual things, in succeeding experiences. The other types appear already as physical things employed as symbols. To take advantage of these symbolic physical things when they occur, they must be recognised for what they are and not taken literally. Aside from their value in conducting everyday affairs, insights are the starting points for the construction of myths and systems of primary concepts that serve as maps of manifest reality.

Now and then an insight comes along which points to or hints at what is beyond all experiencing. These insights too sometimes feature physical things employed symbolically, and sometimes simply a formless feeling of certainty that there is a 'beyond' and that this beyond is supremely relevant to the person's own limited, circumscribed existence.

Karmic seed

An actual existent is a unit of experiencing, a discrete, definitive experience. It exists in two modes. The first is as a momentary appearance in the now. This appearance is the culmination of a process by which it is created, an episode of experiencing. No sooner does it appear than its immediacy is lost; it recedes into the past. However, it continues in the past as a permanent, subtle influence, contributing to the creation of subsequent existents. This is its second mode of existence. In this mode it is termed a karmic trace or karmic seed. The term 'seed' signifies that in this mode the experience, though 'dormant', is alive and potentially active. The term karma is used to evoke the general notion that everything that happens now in the totality of all experiences will influence what will happen in every experience in the future, and similarly that the present is influenced by the past.

Knowing

The experience brought forth in an episode of experiencing is known by the subject of that experience. Experiencing and knowing occur

simultaneously; they are one and the same. Every feature of it is known, and nothing that is not in it can be known. Something about that experience may be inferred, or gained by the testimony of others, but only in later experiences, never in that experience itself.

An act of knowing occurs in two stages. The first stage is what is termed in this book prehension. This is the transmission of influence from the past to the present. In themselves prehensions are not, however, sufficient for a complete knowledge of the experience. Before the complete experience can be brought forth prehensions must be clearly articulated, or made into definite things or objects. For this they must be placed in a clear-cut temporal context, which is the function of time, and those prehensions which are to become physical things must also be given extension and its parts organised into a pattern of extensive relationships. This objectification occurs simultaneously with the final prehension which is the satisfaction phase of an episode of experiencing.

Life

In the worldview of contemporary global culture life is not recognised as a formative element of experience (*see* Formative elements of experiencing); the basic framework of the system is constructed without it. However, it cannot be ignored entirely, and so it is brought in, as it were, as an afterthought: it is an 'emergent property' of certain complex arrangements of material particles. This is pretty feeble, but conforms to the behaviourist approach to explaining phenomena. Life is the way certain material structures behave. They behave the way they do because they are alive. Needless to say, such careless thinking leads to problematic actions.

In the worldview being presented here, life is the impetus for and the sustaining energy of an episode of experiencing. It is what causes or enables the movement from potentiality to actuality (*see* Potential).

There are two models for describing this movement into manifest existence, that of flowing and ebbing and that of overflowing. In both the creative process is seen to pulsate. This accounts for the occurrence of experience in discrete units demarcated by intervals of nothingness.

Myth

A myth is one way of representing insights (*see* Insight) into the inner architecture and functioning of episodes of experiencing (*see* Episode of experiencing) and also what is beyond experiencing. The way a myth is represented is usually suggested by the imagery of the insight itself. The images are of physical things in experience which symbolise the abstract organising principles operating 'behind the scenes', so to speak, or points to the inexpressible reality beyond manifestation. Thus the elements of mythical representation are not words but the concrete entities and situations of everyday life. The purpose of myth is to orient the person to a society's collective way of thinking and acting. In other words, mythical symbols of a given culture and cultural era are the vehicles of that culture's worldview.

Person

(see Subject)

Potential

By the strict criteria of what is real (*see* That Which Is) the experiences brought forth in episodes of experiencing are unreal. Nevertheless, they cannot be ignored. Since they seem to 'come out of' or to be an 'aspect of' what is real, they cannot be entirely unreal. They can be termed dependent realities. They exist in potential in That Which Is.

The symbol used to describe this potential in this book is that of the Dweller at the Source of the river of manifestation. His flowing out from the Source (or That Which Is) is the creative act of bringing forth an experience. In this He is helped by His 'Seven Sisters'.

More prosaically, the Dweller at the Source is a latent duality of subject and object within the featureless unity of the Source. The actualisation of this duality can be likened to the pulling apart of oppositely charged electrodes, and the resulting field of activity that springs up between them. The Seven Sisters are the seven formative elements of experiencing, or the seven categories of thought.

Prehension

The term prehension means the action of grasping or seizing. Karmic seeds of past experiences are grasped and pulled into a process of creating a new experience. The terms 'grasping' and 'pulling into' are used as mechanical metaphors for the way in which a subtle influence is transferred from a seed to a prehending episode. The seed remains as it was, but yields up an impression of itself, as it were. It is thus potentially available to any number of new episodes. Its potency does not diminish with the number of times it is prehended.

In the beginning of the process of creating a new experience (*see* episode of experiencing) all karmic seeds are 'scanned' for their potential relevance to that experience. Some are accepted (a 'positive' prehension) and some are rejected (a 'negative' prehension). This process of rejection is termed a 'negative' prehension.

Primary concepts

A complete worldview consists of the answers to the three perennial questions, who am I, what is the nature of experience, and what is real. The answer to the second question consists of definitions that satisfy the requirements of each of the seven formative elements of experiencing.

The answers to the perennial questions differ, often radically so, in the worldviews (*see* Worldview) of different cultures and cultural eras. Each age must formulate answers that best suit its needs, reaffirming and re-interpreting inherited concepts if they are found appropriate to the changed circumstances of the present, or discarding them entirely and formulating new definitions where they are not appropriate. When this is not done periodically, a civilisation may decay and collapse.

The answers to the second question are primary concepts because they are ultimate explanations; there is no going behind them to something more fundamental in terms of which they can be explained. In respect of the answers satisfying the seven categories of thought (*see* Formative elements of experiencing), each one must pre-suppose the other six if the resulting worldview is to be coherent.

Secondary concepts are not ultimate. They are arrived at by logical deduction from primary concepts. They are the primary elements of a cultural model which defines the possibilities for, and limits to, all thought and action in a given culture.

The common answer to the first and third of the perennial questions is termed a primary concepts for convenience. It is actually a statement based on the 'knowledge – the knowledge that I exist and that this existence is unqualified; it is nothing perceptible or conceivable; it has no beginning and no ending, and it never changes. It is, and I know it by becoming it.

Real

Of the things that appear in experience, none is permanent: atoms and galaxies, stones, trees, people, ecosystems all come and go. They appear briefly and then pass away. Even when they seem to persist for a while, they are in reality different from moment to moment.

Any exhaustive search among the unending stream of momentary experiences will finally reveal to us that which is real, ever-existing, never-changing, beginningless and endless. It is the bare sense of 'I', the Subject of all experience. Not 'I am this or that". But only 'I'. It is not an object, but only subject, pure subjectivity. It is not a thought, a feeling, and emotion, or even and intuition. No insight is deep enough to reveal it. It simply is. It is accordingly termed 'That Which Is'.

That Which Is, pure awareness, or pure being, is the answer to the first of the perennial questions – who am I – as well as the last – what is real.

Rta

Rta is the Vedic formulation of the concept of law as immanent in all things. It is a unitary, dynamic process which determines the content of all experiences and is, in turn, freshly constituted at every moment on the basis of the content of all those experiences which appeared during the previous moment. What appears now depends upon what appeared in the totality of past episodes of experiencing, and what will appear int he future

depends on the totality of what appears now.

Rta performs two different tasks. One is the determination of the totality of universal causal relationships moment by moment, and the other is that of an archivist. All karmic seeds are deposited, as it were, in its archives, and arranged and classified so that they can be retrieved efficiently to meet the needs of future generations of experiences.

Satisfaction

A satisfaction is the third and final phase of an episode of experiencing, in which a novel, new experience appears. As a technical term it is the prehension of the end result of the concrescence phase of the episode. Its more general meaning is that it satisfies the desire of the I am for experience. As soon as a satisfaction is achieved, the experience, as a current phenomenon, is terminated. It recedes into the past where it continues to exist as a karmic seed. From the past it can be prehended by a fresh episode, and so return to the present as an ingredient of a new experience.

Secondary concepts

(see Primary concepts)

Space

There are four types of things brought forth in an episode of experiencing: physical, mental, emotional and feeling. A physical thing, in as far as it is composed of parts, is made distinct by acquiring a set of extended relationships among its parts. These relationships are described in terms of distances of each part from all the other parts and the direction from them in which it lies. Each part, in turn, is made distinct in the same way. This extensiveness is termed space. Other types of experiences do not have parts and thus are not spatially articulated except indirectly. A mental thing or concept is often represented by an image of a physical thing or things, and this image is given extensive relations as is done with an

actual physical thing. Feelings and emotions are singular and without parts, but they are usually referred to parts of the body, which reference is spatial (for example, 'the fright caused my heart to miss a beat', 'my toe pains').

The basic metric of space is the amount of relative movement of two parts of a thing in two successive experiences. In practice, a bigger and more easily measured unit is chosen. This is the distance moved in an interval of many successive experiences in a temporal community (*see* Community).

Subject

The subject of an experience, that which experiences an object or thing in an episode of experiencing, appears, along with the thing, on the actualisation of the potential for manifestation. It is the I who experiences.

The subject, I, not only experiences an object, or objective situation, it usually also identifies with that situation. More specifically, it identifies itself with the body of a particular *Homo sapiens*.

The subject may be unaware of this identification, in which case it is termed a person. The person is a forgetful subject. He or she feels that he or she is looking 'out' at an experience from 'within'.

A subject who is aware of being a person is a detached participant in experience. The detached participant is not a person, neither is it what is observed, nor even the observer. At the same time, it realises the inevitability of its apparent involvement in an experience, and accepts this involvement as a convenient fiction, behaving as an actor in a play.

As one aspect of the actualised potential, the I is a derivative of That Which Is. In essence, therefore, the subject is only That Which is. (And so is the object.)

That Which Is

The third of the perennial questions, what is real, is answered in this worldview by stating that it is the background from which experiences

emerge and into which the again merge. The experiences themselves, be they waking or dream experiences, or an experience of deep sleep, are unreal because they are not independent entities; they depend on the larger context of that from which they emerge. Further, they have a beginning in time. Only the background is permanent, beginningless, and requires nothing else to exist – and hence is real. Aside from its logical necessity, the background can be directly known by stopping the flow of experiences in meditation. This knowing, however, is not a result of experiencing because experiencing requires a duality of subject and object which only come into existence with the appearance of an experience. It is a state of pure being that exists prior to the experience of being this or that. The knower becomes that pure being or That Which Is. An intimation of such a state of pure being is occasionally revealed in deep insight.

This background cannot be given a name since a name can only be given to a thing, and it is not a thing. It has therefore, after the Greek philosopher Parmenides, been termed simply 'That Which Is'. This refers to the fact that all that can be said about it is that it exists (*see* Existence). In Western thought it has, when it has appeared at all, been termed the 'Absolute", the 'Unbounded' (aperion) of Anaximander, and the 'One' of Plotinus to signify that it is an absolute negation of all attempts to describe and name it, and that it is the All. In the Indian Vedic tradition it is termed 'Brahman', and in the Buddhist tradition *Sunyata* (the void). In terms of number symbolism, often used in ancient thought, it is said to be the zero, or the 'no-number'. (The subject and the object of a world are then designated one and two, respectively.)

That Which Is is experienced as pure being, or unqualified existence. It is also pure awareness and unalloyed bliss.

That Which Is is also the answer to the first of the perennial questions, who am I.

Thing

The word 'thing' is a technical term that denotes a distinct, discrete feature of an experience brought forth in an episode of experiencing. It

may be a physical thing like a stone, a thought thing like the concept of the number three, an emotion like the fear of heights, or a feeling like the pain of a burnt finger. In any one experience there is only one thing.

As far as we know, all things are made up of simpler things, that is, they are temporal shared - characteristic or systems communities.

When a community appears repeatedly in a number of consecutive experiences it takes on the appearance of a (relatively) enduring entity. These appearances are termed 'temporal communities'. They are thought things.

In a temporal series of similar experiences the subject of those experiences identifies itself explicitly or implicitly with one part of the thing. This thing defines the type of experience. Thus in an electron experience, the pre-eminent thing is an electron, in a human experience the body of a particular *Homo sapiens*, and in a sun experience the sun.

Time

Time is one of the formative elements of experiencing. This means that it is not an object of experience, but one of the ways in which all experience whatsoever is inevitably shaped. In defining it, the most that can legitimately be said is that our concept of time derives from the appearances of a series of things in a temporal community (see Community).

Within a temporal community, the general sense of time is made exact by portioning it by means of a definite metric. The basis of the metric is the differences in the relative spatial arrangement of the given thing in a temporal community. These differences are recognised in our saying that that the part 'moved', or 'those parts moved'. Any regular, periodic movement can become a metric. Thus we say, for example: 'This thought occurred to me last evening', or 'This bone is of a dinosaur that lived 100 million years ago.' Both these statements are made in terms of the regular (apparent) movement of the sun in relation to the earth's horizons in a particular series of experiences.

World image

A world image is an accompaniment of every experience. This world image is an generated by the sense of continuity or connectedness of many successive experiences within the experience of a temporal community (*see* Community). It is a feeling thing. It is a conceptual thing. There are many types or species of world images; electron images, for example, or sun images, or human images. A world image is the ultimate context of all experiences.

There are enough similarities among world images of the same species to allow us to speak of, for example, 'electron worlds', 'earthworm worlds', 'human worlds'. This process is facilitated in the case of human world images by language, a common worldview, education, the media, technology, and so forth. As a temporal community, such an image changes over time in response to fresh insights that reveal the current state of the cosmic causal agency, *Rta*.

Worldview

The term 'worldview', or sometimes simply 'view', 'system of thought', 'conceptual scheme' or 'conceptual framework', or 'mindset', denotes a constellation of primary concepts about the nature of experience that is shared by all members of a given culture.

The term 'worldview' is not really appropriate in the context of this book since it connotes a view of a definite substantial entity – a world. As explained in the note 'World image' in this glossary, there is no such physical entity. Nevertheless, the term worldview is used for convenience.

The term 'cosmology' has traditionally been used until recently to denote what is here termed worldview. Now, however, the term cosmology is limited to a scientific theory concerning the physical origin and development of the universe (see the Concise Oxford English Dictionary, 2002). For this reason it is not used in this book.

A worldview must be coherent, logical and effective. The meaning of the term coherence is given in a separate heading. Logical means that the

primary concepts must contradict one another. An effective worldview will be capable of explaining all phenomena that present themselves in contemporary human experience.

A worldview is a cultural artefact arising from the collective experiences of a particular culture and cultural era. At the same time it shapes the experiences of the people of that culture or cultural era.

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A Return to the Perennial Questions

M. G. JACKSON

More and more people the world over, and in all walks of life, are coming to the conclusion that the many ills of our planet and our shared global culture are, in the last analysis, the result of a defective worldview. This worldview has been inherited by us from the European Enlightenment of the 17th century, is the rationale for the ways we interact with the natural world and organise our collective lives. This worldview must therefore be questioned fundamentally, at the level of its basic concepts. The author does this systematically by asking the perennial questions, those questions that the people of every age have had to ask themselves - and attempt to answer. When this is done the answers formulated by the Enlightenment scientists and philosophers are seen to be incomplete and logically flawed. They also fail adequately to explain the many new facts that have come to light in the past three centuries, and particularly during the 20th century.

The worldview based on the fresh answers suggested in this book points to alternative ways of organising our affairs, ways that could heal our planet and our society and give us a sustainable future.

Many of the new concepts formulated in this book are already implied in contemporary discourses and practices in alternative forms of agriculture, education, health care, business and many other areas of human endeavour, but which have so far not been articulated clearly, nor brought together into a coherent system.

Permanent Green
An imprint of
Manchi Pustakam

978-93-80153-96-4